

Abstract of Thesis

Several critics have sought to identify the central features in the multiplicity of Thomas De Quincey's work. J. Hillis Miller speaks of the 'common essence', Robert Maniquis of 'those essential patterns', Edmund Baxter of 'the key themes which, to my mind, make of De Quincey's disparate works a unified whole.' Yet despite their merits, these critical deliberations have not revealed the essential De Quincey.

De Quincey's genius is constituted in four distinct elements. One: the periodical writer. De Quincey never sat down to write anything without one eye fixed firmly on the monthly magazine audiences he was expected to entertain and enlighten. It was his job to provoke an argument, debunk a trend, relate an amusing anecdote, interpret an idea.

Two: the logician. De Quincey's analytical bent is the primary influence on his work as a literary critic and a detective and it serves him extremely well as a populariser, especially of economics. The same bent leads De Quincey to insist on precision in the use of language. Even highly imaginative works like *Suspiria* are characterised by his love of the analytical.

Three: the disciple. Wordsworth is everywhere in the writings of De Quincey. At the same time Wordsworth respected De Quincey's literary abilities and often sought to exploit them. Yet Wordsworth and De Quincey are two strikingly different writers. The most critical difference between the two is the way in which they depict the guilt and fear of their childhood experience.

Four: the rhetorician. De Quincey championed the 'literature of power' as a moral force which would galvanise and enliven the energies of man's heart. In the vast majority of his essays he crafts a mellifluous and pliant prose. But in works of 'impassioned prose' like the *Confessions Trilogy* he produces his own form of 'power' in order to try and beat back the blight of modern industrial advance.

These four elements make his work instantly identifiable: they are the fundamental and indelible strands from which he weaves the endless variety of his writing, the 'fixed predetermined centres' around which gather 'whatever heterogeneous elements...may have accumulated from without.'

**Thomas De Quincey:
The Strands of Genius**

R.J.H. Morrison



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I hereby verify that the work included in this thesis is all my own and the result of my own research.

R.J.H. Morrison
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Key To Brief Titles Cited

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|---------------------------------|---|
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| Bonner | W.H. Bonner, <i>De Quincey at Work</i> (New York: Airport Publishers), 1973 [1936]. |
| Carlyle, <i>Letters</i> | <i>The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle</i> , vols. I-IX, gen. ed. C.R. Saunders (Durham: Duke University Press), 1970-1981. |
| Caseby | Richard Caseby, <i>The Opium-Eating Editor: Thomas De Quincey and the Westmorland Gazette</i> (Kendal: Westmorland Gazette), 1985. |
| Coleridge, <i>Letters</i> | <i>The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge</i> , VI vols., ed. L.E. Griggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1956-1971. |
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- Lindop Grevel Lindop, *The Opium-Eater: A Life of Thomas De Quincey* (London: Dent), 1981.
- Mail-Coach* 'The English Mail-Coach' in Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater and Other Writings*, ed. Grevel Lindop (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1985.

- Masson *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, XIV vols., ed. D. Masson (Edinburgh: A. and C. Black), 1896-1897.
- Memorials* *De Quincey Memorials*, II vols., ed. A.H. Japp (London: William Heinemann), 1891.
- NLS National Library of Scotland
- Post. Works* *The Posthumous Works of Thomas De Quincey*, II vols., ed. A.H. Japp (London: William Heinemann), 1891.
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- Suspiria* 'Suspiria de Profundis' in Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater and Other Writings*, ed. Grevel Lindop (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1985.
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- Wordsworth, *Letters* *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, VII vols., ed. E. De Selincourt; *The Early Years, 1785-1805*, revised C.L. Shaver (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1967; *The Middle Years, Part I, 1806-1811*, revised Mary Moorman (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1969; *The Middle Years, Part II, 1812-1820*, revised Mary Moorman and Alan G. Hill; *The Later Years, 1821-1853*, IV vols., revised Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1978-1988.

Chapter I

The Literary Figure: Organizing Principles Which Fuse Into Harmony

My personal identity, therefore, implies the continued existence of that indivisible thing which I call myself. Whatever this self may be, it is something that thinks, and deliberates, and resolves, and acts, and suffers. I am not thought, I am not action, I am not feelings; I am something that thinks, and acts, and suffers. My thoughts, and actions, and feelings, change every moment; they have no continued, but a successive existence; but that *self* or *I*, to which they belong, is permanent, and has the same relation to all succeeding thoughts, actions, and feelings, which I call mine.

--Thomas Reid, 'Of Identity', 1785¹

Thomas De Quincey's literary reputation has always been uneven. When *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* appeared in 1821 Henry Crabb Robinson described it as 'a melancholy composition, a fragment of autobiography in emulation of Coleridge's diseased egotism.' *The New Edinburgh Review* charged the *Confessions* with plagiarism, claiming that the 'Malay Dream' was derived from a tale by James Hogg. The cry of plagiarism went up again two years later when, in a letter to the editor of the *London Magazine*, William Hazlitt complained that De Quincey's brief article criticising Robert Malthus's *Essay on Population* exhibited 'rather a striking coincidence' with a publication of his own. Shortly thereafter Hazlitt sneered that De Quincey would be good only 'whilst the opium was trickling from his lips.' In 1824, De Quincey published a savage review of Thomas Carlyle's translation of Goethe's

Wilhelm Meister. In response, Carlyle labelled De Quincey 'a man who writes of things which he does not understand; I see clean over top of him, and his vulgar spite and common-place philosophy.' Nine years later, after reading 'The Caesars', Carlyle informed J.S. Mill that De Quincey was 'one of the most irreclaimable Tories now extant.'²

De Quincey's 1834-1835 articles on Coleridge were deplored by many for their indiscretion. Edward FitzGerald remarked that they seemed to him 'to proceed from a kind of enervation in De Quincey.' Julius Hare wrote simply, 'All persons I have met with who have read them have risen from them with the same disgust.' A few years later De Quincey's similarly indiscreet essays on Wordsworth provoked a strong reaction from the poet himself: 'a man who can set such an example, I hold to be a pest in society, and one of the most worthless of mankind.' In 1851, Nathaniel Hawthorne declared that 'no Englishman cares a pin for [De Quincey].' And when De Quincey died the *Athenaeum* lamented his 'sad and almost profitless career' and 'an intellect that remained active to the last, but had never at any time been of much service to his fellow-men.'³

A few years after De Quincey's death, John Cowley Fisher told John Henry Newman 'how much [he] was struck' by the *Quarterly Review's* assertion that De Quincey 'thought there was a good deal in Newman's theory of development, not as tending to Romanism, but as helping to harmonise Scripture with modern thought.' Newman grumbled to Cowley in response,

As to de [sic] Quincey, I wonder if he saw even the outside of my book on doctrinal development. If he ever saw it, he would have known that the object of it, and the matter of it, was solely and entirely to answer the very objection which he makes.⁴

In an 1863 review, the *British Quarterly* stated that the recently completed edition of De Quincey's *Collected Works* contained 'not one great work, not a single essay, discussion, or treatise, or tale, on which a lasting literary reputation can be built.' Gerard Manley Hopkins, in an early diary entry, recorded one of the many stories that must have circulated regarding De Quincey and his debilitating opium addiction. 'De Quincey would wake blue and trembling in the morning', Hopkins writes,

and languidly ask the servant "Would you pour out some of that black mixture from the bottle there." The servant would give it him, generally not knowing what it was. After this he would revive. This would happen in Nicol's house, whose son told it to W. Addis who told me.⁵

In a *Fortnightly Review* article James Hutchison Stirling concluded that De Quincey was 'guilty of monstrous injustice' in his writings on the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Leslie Stephen stated flatly of De Quincey's career:

in a life of seventy-three years [he] read extensively and thought acutely by fits, ate an enormous quantity of opium, wrote a few pages which revealed new capacities in the language and provided a good deal of respectable padding for the magazines.⁶

The nineteenth century closed with several commentators turning De Quincey into 'the "scholar-gypsy"....a sort of dreamy rag-and-bone man.' Mrs. Oliphant called him 'that curious figure in literature....so elf-like in all his ways.'⁷

In the twentieth century De Quincey has been frequently attacked or dismissed. 'V.R.', in a series of seven short articles for *Notes and Queries* catalogues in detail the many errors and inaccuracies he finds

in every corner of De Quincey's writings. 'I do not see how a writer so careless and freakish can be entitled to the honourable title of erudite', he writes. De Quincey 'is disgracefully slack about verifying things, muddles his favourite authors, and is so often faulty in his quotations that one wonders if anything he quotes is right.' At one point V.R. refers to De Quincey as 'this stupid or very ignorant critic.'⁸

More recently, Albert Goldman in his *The Mind and the Mint* demonstrates that De Quincey is far more dependent on source materials than was previously realized. Goldman writes: De Quincey's

many works of a scholarly or intellectual nature are almost all derived in the most direct way from printed sources, and in almost every case from a single volume. In every article of this kind, De Quincey has produced a clever piece of hack work, writing with the source book in one hand and the pen in the other - translating, abstracting, and abridging, piecing together inadequate notes preserved for such purposes, and in general working like some hard-pressed inhabitant of Grub Street.⁹

In the last twenty-five years Howard Mills declares that 'De Quincey misjudged his own potential. Always confident that he could become the man to revolutionise English philosophy, he prepared himself for nothing better than literary odd-jobbing.' In the opinion of John Jordan De Quincey 'cannot be ranked among the very great critics because his work is too fragmentary and unreliable.' V.A. De Luca is dissatisfied because 'in too much of De Quincey's writings the visionary impulse is found awash in a sea of prose, prose written under anxiety to meet a printer's deadline and to please an indiscriminating periodical readership.' F.W.J. Hemmings describes De Quincey as 'the Manchester journalist whose enormous output contains, among much flatulent and pretentiously overwritten stuff, just a few essays thanks to which he

deserves his small niche in the gallery of the minor English romantics.¹⁰ Christopher Gillie, in the *Cambridge Guide to the Arts in Britain*, informs us that De Quincey is 'best known for his autobiography, *Memoirs of an English Opium-Eater*.' Gillie is also one of many critics who writes that the *Confessions* was published in '1822' instead of the correct date, 1821.¹¹ Eric Christiansen, in his 1991 review of John Barrell's *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey*, begins with a question: 'The *what* of *who*? - you ask, if you are not one of the five professors and four undergraduates and three asylum patients who still read the Q in question.'¹² Finally, De Quincey is still submitted to the indignity of having his name spelt three different ways - 'De Quincey', 'de Quincey' or 'DeQuincey.' There is something curiously indistinct about a literary figure with a name that nobody can agree on how to spell.¹³

Much of the criticism levelled at De Quincey over the past one hundred and seventy years is just. Yet it must be set against a long and varied background of praise. Edgar Allen Poe writes exuberantly of the 1821 *Confessions*, 'fine, very fine! - glorious imagination - deep philosophy - acute speculation - plenty of fire and fury, and a good spicing of the decidedly unintelligible. That was a nice bit of flummery, and went down the throats of people delightfully.' Charles Lamb said of 'On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*': '[De Quincey] has written a thing better than anything I could write; - no - not better than anything I could write, but I could not write anything better.' Sara Hutchinson thought 'the style and descriptions' of *Walladmor* 'very far beyond anything in merit you meet with in such publications - seldom indeed anywhere - for everything that De Quincey does must be clever.' A few years later Coleridge wrote that 'in purity of style' *Klosterheim* reaches 'an excellence to which Sir W. Scott...appears never to have

aspired.¹⁴ The Brontë sisters sent De Quincey a volume of their poetry 'in acknowledgment of the pleasure and profit we have often and long derived from your works.' When in London in 1849 Herman Melville 'ran out, & at last got hold of "The Opium Eater".' He described it as 'a most wondrous book.' In a review of the first four volumes of the *Collected Works*, the *Westminster* wondered that De Quincey was not better known and praised his writings as 'filled with passages of a power and beauty which have never been surpassed by any other prose writer of the age.'¹⁵ In its assessment of the first four volumes, the *Eclectic* lauded De Quincey as a historical writer.

De Quincey, indeed, we have often pronounced to be, since Tacitus, *potentially* the greatest of history writers. He is as eloquent, as epic, as impassioned in his nobler narratives as Carlyle, and he is far more dignified, less melodramatic, and purer in style.

Of the edition as a whole, the *Eclectic* added that, when completed, 'it will constitute the most valuable and most enduring collection of papers, which had originally appeared in a periodical form, to be found in the entire world of literature.'¹⁶

De Quincey's influence on French literature was consolidated in 1860 when Charles Baudelaire published *Les Paradises Artificiels*, the last section of which translates, summarises and discusses large sections of the *Confessions*. 'If I were to pen this narrative in a manner truly worthy of it', Baudelaire averred of De Quincey's descriptions of his life with Ann of Oxford Street, 'I should have to pluck a feather from an angel's wing, so chaste and filled with candour, grace, and pity do I find this episode.' In an 1861 review of the *Works*, the *Quarterly* wondered, as the *Westminster* had, at the 'slight impression' made by De Quincey 'upon the public': 'his style is superb', it

contends: 'his powers of reasoning unsurpassed: his imagination warm and brilliant, and his humour both masculine and delicate.' A year before his death Charles Dickens told a guest that among all the books which he admired those of De Quincey belonged to his 'especial favourites.' John Addington Symonds described himself when a student at Harrow as 'a diligent student' of De Quincey.¹⁷

In this century Virginia Woolf has been one of De Quincey's most enthusiastic and perceptive admirers. She credits him with altering 'slightly the ordinary relationships.'

He shifted the value of familiar things. And this he did in prose, which makes us wonder whether, then, it is quite so limited as the critics say, and ask further whether the prose writer, the novelist, might not capture fuller and finer truths than are now his aim if he ventured into those shadowy regions where De Quincey has been before him.¹⁸

Bernard Shaw wrote that when he 'was a young man not much past 25', he was 'of a very revolutionary and contradictory temperament, full of Darwin and Tyndall, of Shelley and De Quincey, of Michael Angelo and Beethoven.' D.H. Lawrence declared that he could 'go on reading and reading [De Quincey]': 'I like him', said Lawrence, '...because he also dislikes such people as Plato and Goethe, whom I dislike.'²¹ Wallace Stevens considered De Quincey's essay on 'Oliver Goldsmith' 'to be remarkably well-done; indeed one of the best things I have ever seen on any poet (or prose-writer either for that).' Dylan Thomas, in his *Poetic Manifesto*, listed De Quincey as among the first writers he read and sought to imitate.²² The humour of George Orwell's 'Decline of the English Murder' owes much to the exuberance of De Quincey's four essays 'On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts.'¹⁹ De Quincey even makes an appearance in the mescaline induced deliriums of Consul

Firmin in Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*. The Consul is in his garden looking for a stashed bottle of tequila when he hears the words of his neighbour Mr. Quincey knock 'on his consciousness - or someone actually was knocking on a door - fell away, then knocked again, louder. Old De Quincey', the Consul remembers,

the knocking on the gate in Macbeth. Knock, knock, knock: who's there? Cat. Cat who? Catastrophe. Catastrophe who? Catastro-physicist. What, is it you, my popocat? Just wait an eternity till Jacques and I have finished murdering sleep? Katabasis to cat abysses. Cat hartes atratus...Of course, he should have know [sic] it, these were the final moments of the retiring of the human heart, and of the final entrance of the fiendish, the night insulated - just as the real De Quincey (that mere drug fiend, he thought opening his eyes - he found he was looking straight toward the tequila bottle) imagined the murder of Duncan and the others insulated, self-withdrawn into a deep syncope and suspension of earthly passion...But where had Quincey gone?²⁰

Jorge Luis Borges, in 'To A Certain Ghost, 1940', cries out to De Quincey to save England from 'the German boar and Italian hyena.' 'Dream again, De Quincey', he writes.

Weave nightmare nets
as a bulwark for your island.
Let those who hate you wander without end
inside your labyrinths of time.
Let their nights be measured by centuries, by eras, by pyramids,
Let their weapons dissolve to dust, their faces dust,
let us now be saved by the indecipherable structures
that filled your sleep with horror.
Brother of night, eater of opium,
father of winding sentences which already are mazes and towers,
creator of unforgettable words -
do you hear me, unseen friend,
through these fathomless things:
the sea and death?²¹

De Quincey has haunted, entertained and influenced some of the most significant names in twentieth-century literature.

For the greater part of this century critics maintained a steady but detached interest in the writings of De Quincey. This trend changed sharply, however, with the publication in 1963 of J. Hillis Miller's *The Disappearance of God*, the opening chapter of which offers a detailed and compelling analysis of De Quincey's ceaseless struggle for security and meaning in a world "without God". Miller sees the death of De Quincey's sister Elizabeth as 'the key' to the 'opium dreams' because this incident shatters the previously unassailable unity of the young boy's world and forces upon him the horrid possibility that the human soul is without significance when set against the infinities of time and space. Opium initially appears to De Quincey to restore the unity of a lost past, yet in the end the drug serves only to revive the miseries of that past in endlessly self-replicating nightmares of such terrifying luridness that De Quincey is stunned and vanquished. Only 'at the moment of death' does De Quincey realize that 'man knows God through the absence of God', that in death 'we shall experience a fathomless solitude, but through it we shall also experience, by anticipation, our reconciliation with God and with all we lost when we were exiled from the Paradise of childhood.'²² Miller's exegesis revealed De Quincey as a more substantial figure than previous critical opinion might have suggested.

Many critics followed Miller in exploring and extolling the achievement of De Quincey. David Wright asserts that the '*Confessions* can be seen as part of a long, sporadically written autobiography, which taken together is probably the best autobiography in the language.' Charles Proudfit ranks De Quincey 'among the important contributors to the knowledge of human psychology in the light of contemporary psychoanalytic understanding of dreams and early childhood

development.' Laurence Stapleton asserts that in 'The Revolt of the Tartar Tribe' and 'The English Mail-Coach' De Quincey achieves 'a new form', creating a literary medium that 'is able simultaneously to narrate, to interpret and to intensify.' For Alethea Hayter, De Quincey

was the first writer, and he is perhaps still the only one, to study deliberately, from within his personal experience, the way in which dreams and visions are formed, how opium helps to form them and intensifies them, and how they are then re-composed, and used in conscious art – in his case "impassioned prose".²³

Robert Maniquis explores 'how the opium fantasist lives in the political writer', 'how we can read [De Quincey's] journalistic pieces on the Roman Empire just as we read *The English Mail-Coach*, for the Opium-Eater's history and his dreams are only versions of one consistent kind of writing in which the pariah is saving himself.' John Barrell, like Miller, takes the scene in Elizabeth's bedchamber as his starting point but whereas Miller's interpretation is ultimately theological, Barrell details how De Quincey's 'myth of childhood' is a highly complex 'involute' that repeatedly structures his most disparate narratives and that includes, at its deepest levels, dreams of Imperial grandeur and the violence, terror and guilt De Quincey associates with the Orient. 'It seems best', he writes, 'to think of the relation between childhood and the oriental in De Quincey's writings as a relation between two forms of guilt, personal and political, in which each can be a displaced version of the other, and in which each aggravates the other in an ascending spiral of violence.'²⁴ Finally, deconstructionists have flocked to De Quincey, and for obvious reasons. In addition to his delight in language and linguistic horseplay, De Quincey writes, rewrites, revises and rejects his own history so often that he is led, as Stephen Spector puts it, 'inexorably to undermine the activity to which

he as an autobiographer seems committed – the construction of himself.' Edmund Baxter remarks:

De Quincey's writing provides an area in which the struggle between life and death is enacted, but only locally resolved....The mechanics of the death-wish and the mechanics of writing are analogous. In writing the alienated self becomes acclimatised to its non-existence; and this acclimatisation is a concomitant of the social relations which produce the individual being. Writing idealises, memorialises and exhumes the supposed self of the writer.²⁵

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this catalogue of recent critical speculation is its variety: De Quincey as analyst of opium reverie, as innovative prose stylist, as embodiment of nineteenth-century spiritual angst, as precursor of Freud, as compulsive and bedeviled Imperialist, as autobiographer and as self-effacing autobiographer. Yet to a considerable extent, this critical variety only mirrors and attempts to decipher the exceptional variety of De Quincey's writings themselves, for they include, as Barrell neatly summarises, 'novels, short stories, translations of fiction mainly from the German, works of literary theory, autobiographical writings in various modes, biographical essays, essays critical, essays economic, geographical, historical, philological, philosophical, political, scientific, and so on.'²⁶ De Quincey's prolific writing career spans five decades and arches through markedly different eras: it commences during his intimacy with Wordsworth, flourishes when Carlyle is at his peak and finishes when George Eliot is at work on *The Mill and the Floss*. And though there are dramatic highs and lows, De Quincey is productive and occasionally brilliant through every phase of his career. Indeed, though we commonly group De Quincey with Lamb, Hazlitt, Coleridge, Southey and Wordsworth, he was

at the height of his powers well after death or debility had shut down these other writers: Grevel Lindop refers to *The English Mail-Coach* as 'the most finely-organized of all De Quincey's longer prose pieces', Geoffrey Carnall calls the section on John Williams from the "Postscript" to 'On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts' 'perhaps the best thing [De Quincey] ever wrote' and De Luca describes the revision of *Confessions* 'as a more rounded achievement than any of [De Quincey's] previous works.'²⁷ These three pieces were all produced at the same time as Dickens's *Bleak House* and *Hard Times*, Thackeray's *The History of Henry Esmond*, Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice*, Tennyson's *Maud and Other Poems*, Newman's *Callista* and the first four volumes of Macaulay's *History of England*. Though the influence of Dickens, Newman and Macaulay is nowhere near as strong as that of Wordsworth and Coleridge, all these writers are De Quincey's 'contemporaries'. The variety of recent critical assessments, the variety of De Quincey's writings themselves and the shifting political, literary and social backdrops against which his long career evolves all serve to highlight the remarkable complexity, range and centrality of De Quincey as a nineteenth-century literary figure.

Yet beneath all this diversity there is a sense in which there lurks what might be called the 'essential' De Quincey. Several of the critics cited above have sought to identify the central features in the multiplicity of De Quincey's work. Miller speaks of the 'common essence', Maniquis of 'those essential patterns', Baxter of 'the key themes which, to my mind, make of De Quincey's disparate works a unified whole.' Barrell contends that 'the most remarkable thing' about De Quincey's 'various texts is that, in whatever direction they seem to travel, towards whatever different goal, they arrive, time and again, in the very same place.'²⁸ Yet despite their merits, these critical

deliberation³ have not revealed the essential De Quincey. Miller and Barrell discourse persuasively on the implications of the 'Elizabeth' involute, but the 'essence' of De Quincey is not as thoroughly steeped in this one incident as they would have us believe, central though it is. Baxter uncovers a tendency to anxiety and alienation in De Quincey but ultimately his interest is in language: 'My work is a hypothesis', he states, 'a proposal which attempts to say something about writing using De Quincey's text as a beginning.'²⁹ Maniquis details the unity of purpose in De Quincey's personal and public visions but he leaves a mass of critical, biographical, autobiographical, fictional and philosophical writing out of his discussion. Critics have thrown strong lights in different directions but the real De Quincey has still not stood up.

De Quincey's genius, it seems to me, is constituted in four distinct elements. One: the periodical writer. De Quincey never sat down to write anything without one eye fixed firmly on the monthly magazine audiences he was expected to entertain and instruct. Generally speaking, it was his job to provoke an argument, debunk a trend, relate an amusing anecdote, interpret an idea; to stand before the public and gossip, pontificate, upbraid and confess. But De Quincey was cagey enough to realize that different magazines had different audiences and that he needed to cultivate distinct mannerisms and biases to suit *Blackwood's*, the *London* or *Tait's*. There is, in De Quincey, a great sense of 'play'; he seems capable of taking almost any opinion or preoccupation and inverting, transforming, modifying, orchestrating or massaging it in order that it accord with the character and affiliations of the particular magazine he is writing for.

Two: the logician. De Quincey's mind was intensely analytical. His dreams of philosophical greatness were gradually broken by bigotry,

temperament and circumstance but his logical bent is the primary influence on his work as a literary critic and a detective and it serves him extremely well as a populariser, especially of economics. The same bent leads De Quincey to insist on precision in the use of language, though here he¹⁵ went to quibble and justify at such length that his narratives grow unwieldy and his arguments become tedious. Even highly imaginative works like *Confessions*³⁰, *Suspiria* and *The Mail-Coach*, or what I shall hereafter refer to as the *Confessions Trilogy*³¹, are characterised by his love of the analytical.

Three: the disciple. Wordsworth is everywhere in the writings of De Quincey. All De Quincey's literary endeavours from his publication in *The Times* of 1809 until his appointment as editor of the *Westmorland Gazette* in 1818 were produced as a direct result of his relationship with the poet. During his career with the magazines De Quincey refers to Wordsworth on at least two hundred separate occasions.³² At the same time Wordsworth respected De Quincey's literary abilities and often sought to exploit them. Yet Wordsworth and De Quincey are two strikingly different writers. In addition to the difference between their chosen literary medium and the audience they sought to entertain, they disagreed, for example, about the value of books and the significance of the Gothic. But perhaps the most critical difference between the two is the way in which they depict the guilt and fear of their childhood experience. In *The Prelude* Wordsworth finds early sorrow a source of future strength while in *Confessions* and *Suspiria* De Quincey finds early sorrow a source of future sorrow. *The Prelude* stands clearly behind *Confessions* and *Suspiria* but while it is a paean to imaginative strength, the other two are tales of woe. Wordsworth exerted an incalculable influence on the writings of De Quincey but it is a testimony to the vitality of De Quincey's own vision

that it was enhanced, and not overwhelmed, by the brilliance of the poet.

Four: the rhetorician. De Quincey championed the 'literature of power' as a moral force which would galvanise and enliven the energies of man's heart. In the vast majority of his essays he crafts a mellifluous and pliant prose to render his thought. But in works of 'impassioned prose' like the *Confessions Trilogy* he produces his own form of 'power' in order to try and beat back the blight of modern industrial advance. De Quincey saw his age as one enervated by iron and steam: the *Trilogy* is his attempt to put man back in touch with his heart.

After reading 'There was a Boy', Coleridge commented of one passage in particular, 'I should have recognised [it] any where; and had I met these lines running wild in the deserts of Arabia, I should have instantly screamed out "Wordsworth!"'.³³ One often has the same sense with De Quincey. For all his complexity, all his diversity, all his prolificity, only a few lines almost invariably lead one to scream out 'De Quincey!' An all-too-evident awareness of his magazine readership, an intellect that incessantly equivocates and reorders, the ubiquitous influence of Wordsworth and a sinuous but highly malleable prose style that ascends on occasion to the impassioned, these four elements make his work instantly identifiable: they are the fundamental and indelible strands from which he weaves the endless variety of his writing, the 'fixed predetermined centres' around which gather 'whatever heterogeneous elements...may have accumulated from without.'³⁴ They comprise the 'essential' De Quincey and it is with them that this thesis is concerned.

Chapter II

The Periodical Writer: or, The Opium-Eater Joins the Circus

The work itself, proceeding according to its plan, will become more interesting when the foundations have been laid. Massiveness is the merit of a foundation; the gilding, ornaments, stucco-work, conveniences, sunshine, and sunny prospects will come with the superstructure.

--Coleridge to Southey of *The Friend* 1809¹

'I never know or can even guess what or who my audience is, or whether I have any audience', Thomas Carlyle told J.S. Mill in 1833. A generation later, in 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', Oscar Wilde wrote, 'A true artist takes no notice whatever of the public. The public to him are non-existent. He has no poppied or honeyed cakes through which to give the monster sleep or sustenance. He leaves that to the popular novelist.'² Thomas De Quincey could not afford Carlyle's 'Devil-may-care principle' or Wilde's disdain: because he sold essays in order to hold off perpetual financial disaster, De Quincey was always acutely conscious of pleasing his audience. He once claimed, indeed, that 'my own way of writing is rather to think aloud, and follow my own humours, than much to consider who is listening to me.'³ But this, of course, is mere posturing. He believed his primary task as a magazine writer was to entertain, which he did with a remarkable ability to combine and modify a number of different styles, topics and opinions. 'Poppied...cakes' were his speciality. To be sure, De Quincey

complained about publishing in the magazine press, the lack of intellectual sophistication in his audiences and the treatment of his texts by some of his editors. But temperamentally he was ideally suited to the medium and on the whole its variety and foolery pleased him. More significantly, on several occasions De Quincey aimed at presenting his readerships with a richer form of entertainment and in these instances he became 'a true artist' in the sense Wilde intended, his magazine 'sighs from the depths' as poignant as those Wilde explored in *De Profundis*.

De Quincey belongs to a generation in which writing for periodicals became a major and rewarding source of livelihood. In the previous century, writing for reviews and magazines had provided a meagre income for professional writers, but with an expanding reading public in the early nineteenth century it became much more practicable to make substantial payments for contributions. 'The only authors who, as a class, are not starving, are periodical essayists', Hazlitt remarked wryly in 1823.⁴ The *Edinburgh Review*, founded in 1802, took the initiative in affording an unprecedented ten guineas a sheet from the very beginning, and an established man of letters like Robert Southey was able to make a steady income from his regular contributions to the *Quarterly Review*.

Every major party acquired its organ of opinion. The *Edinburgh* served as a vehicle for the Whigs, the *Quarterly* for the Tories. The rise of Benthamite utilitarianism to influence in the state was marked by the establishment of the *Westminster Review* in 1824. Intellectual dissenters generated the *Eclectic Review*; High Churchmen read the *British Critic*, evangelicals like De Quincey's mother read the *Christian Observer*. There were also many publications which claimed, like the *Tatler* and *Spectator* a century earlier, exemption from identifiable

commitments, whether political or religious. Of these perhaps the *London Magazine*, founded by John Scott in 1820, was the most celebrated.

The periodical press early acquired a reputation for superficiality and malice. Complaints abounded about the unfair and unscrupulous attacks made on institutions, and on books and their authors, by the *Edinburgh Review*. 'I recollect the effect on me of the Edinburgh on my first poem', Byron wrote Shelley in 1821; 'it was rage, and resistance, and redress - but not despondency nor despair.'⁵ Other periodicals evidently found the truculence practised by the *Edinburgh* profitably acceptable to their readers. The mode attained its most outrageous expression in *Blackwood's Magazine*, notoriously in the attacks on the so-called 'Cockney School', with their dismissal of Keats as a contemptible apothecary's apprentice with ideas above his station.

In assessing De Quincey's role as a periodical writer, it is important to keep in mind this shameless playing to the gallery that is so characteristic of the reviews and magazines of his formative years. A great part of his work was, of course, produced at a time when the general tone of the periodical press was less outrageous. Charles Dickens catches the mood of much mid-century magazine-writing in a letter to John Forster, outlining the plan of his *Master Humphrey's Clock*. He said that he proposed

to start, as *The Spectator* does, with some pleasant fiction relative to the origin of the publication....to write amusing essays on the various foibles of the day as they arise...and to vary the form of the papers by throwing them into sketches, essays, tales, adventures, letters from imaginary correspondents and so forth.⁶

By 1850 Leigh Hunt, a veteran of periodical warfare, could compare current journals with those active in the second decade of the century and conclude that 'readers in these kindlier days of criticism have no conception of the extent to which personal hostility allowed itself to be transported, in the periodicals of those times.'⁷

De Quincey's career with the periodical press began when literary scurrilousness was at its height and it ended in the settled and more prosperous years of the mid-century and beyond. De Quincey wrote almost exclusively for the magazines, though he also spent time with three weekly newspapers - the *Westmorland Gazette*, the *Edinburgh Saturday Post* (later the *Edinburgh Evening Post*) and *Hogg's Weekly Instructor*. De Quincey had a strong dislike of the reviews. On different occasions it looked like he might write for the *Quarterly*. In 1818 he received 'for reviewal...the entire works of Schiller in 26 vols.'⁸ and a year later Wordsworth, Southey and Lord Lonsdale were trying to procure him the job of reviewing on the bullion question. Wilson encouraged De Quincey to write for the *Quarterly* when Lockhart took over the editorship in 1826 and in 1830 Lockhart himself obligingly answered De Quincey's inquiries about writing articles for the review. But all of these ventures came to nothing. De Quincey occasionally showed a passing interest but even the *Quarterly's* agreeable Tory bellicosity did not induce him to make serious efforts at joining her ranks.

De Quincey claimed he disliked the Reviews because, as he put it in 1841, 'I dislike[d] the assumption of judicial functions and authority over the works of my own brother authors and contemporaries.' He adds that in his 'whole life' he has 'written only two.'⁹ This claim, however, is both ironic and untrue. Not only did De Quincey enjoy 'the assumption of judicial functions' but by 1841 a significant number of his finest

essays had been 'reviews' of his 'brother authors and contemporaries', although possibly he wished to forget the ruckus some of these reviews had caused.

De Quincey was more honest when he asserted that he disliked the reviews because he felt they were lacklustre. The reviews appeared once every three months and were thorough, grave and substantial. Carlyle once described the *Edinburgh* as 'a kind of Delphic oracle and voice of the inspired for the great majority of what is called "the intelligent public".' But De Quincey was always unimpressed. In one of his *Post* articles of 1828 he states flatly, 'The whole No., like all Nos. for years back, of the two leading Reviews [the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*], is deficient in novelty, in variety, in literature, (politics, as usual, overbearing every other interest) and general amusement.'¹⁰

De Quincey liked the liveliness of the newspapers and magazines. Newspapers attempted to chart with some exactness the shifting events of the time and usually appeared weekly. Magazines, particularly the tradition initiated by *Blackwood's*, were waggish, high-spirited and bilious and appeared monthly. 'A newspaper is not like a book in its duration', De Quincey explains in a *Westmorland Gazette* article of late 1818.

Books are immortal; for some of them last for ten or even fifteen years: but newspapers must content themselves with an existence almost literally ephemeral: a week is the term of their natural lives: and, if a newspaper exceeds that term, it may be said to have "descended to posterity": the readers of the second week are the posterity of the newspaper: after which they are not much heard of except by antiquarian trunk-makers and chandlers of eminent research. - On this consideration, the Editor of a newspaper must never stop hair-splitting in defence of his logic - or apologising for his grammar and spelling. If he spells amiss one week, he must

consult his spelling book and spell better the next. If the *Chronicle* knocks the *Gazette* down one week, the *Gazette* must get up and knock the *Chronicle* down the next. Motion and change of scene are the life of newspaper politics: there is no unpardonable crime but tediousness; and no sin, past benefit of clergy, but dulness.¹¹

De Quincey enjoyed the newspapers because of their 'get up and knock...down' philosophy.

It was the lack of such a philosophy in Coleridge's weekly *The Friend* that led De Quincey to criticise what he called its 'palpable dulness - dulness that could be felt and handled.' He also complained of Coleridge's

shocking want of adaptation to his audience in the choice of matter, and, even to an audience better qualified to meet such matter, the want of adaptation in the mode of publication, - viz., periodically, and by weekly recurrence; a mode of soliciting the public attention which even authorises the expectation of current topics - topics arising each with its own week or day.¹²

De Quincey had championed *The Friend* when it first appeared and he knew perfectly well Coleridge was writing the work 'for the development of *Principles*'; not to deal with 'topics arising each...week or day.'¹³ In attacking the work, however, he finds an occasion to highlight what he believes to be the guiding principles of newspaper writing: 'current topics' and 'adaption' to the audience.

As a magazinist De Quincey proclaims 'I *must* have some amusement for my reader' or 'amusement it is that the great public seeks in literature.'¹⁴ John Gross has perceptively suggested that the conduct of the quarterlies was like bringing an encyclopaedia up to date, while managing a magazine was analogous to running a theatrical troupe.¹⁵ De Quincey preferred the theatre. 'We regard Blackwood's

Magazine as the first, in point of talent, amongst the journals of the present day,' he declares in the *Post*.

....And...considering the present execution of the two leading reviews [the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*], nothing stands in the way of its claim to the first, excepting only the name of *Magazine*. According to the feeling of the world, undoubtedly the name *Review* has the advantage in point of dignity. For *Magazine* was a name which Blackwood found already degraded to the dust, when he planned his memorable revolution in that department of literature; and it would be too much to expect, that ten years of brilliant writing should dissolve the inveterate associations which almost a century of dulness had gathered about that title. Notwithstanding this, in a philosophical estimate of things, the Magazine is entitled to the precedence. In the Review, as related to the current needs of society, there is a defect....Fictions of the grossest kind, down even to absolute lies, and the forging titles of pamphlets that have never existed, are at present found necessary, in order to furnish an excuse of bringing topics of immediate interest before their bar, and connecting themselves with the shifting passions of the day. Now in Magazines, all this is effected naturally, and in consistency with their plan and professions. They profess to be a general *depot*..both for life and literature; this they profess to be, - and this they are.¹⁶

The reviews were not as cut off from the 'shifting passions of the day' as De Quincey suggests. Moreover, his enthusiasm for *Blackwood's* owes much to the fact that both he and his friend John Wilson were part of the *Blackwood's* team. Nevertheless, De Quincey genuinely believed that the diversity, the exuberance and the roguery of *Blackwood's* made it the finest periodical of the time.

De Quincey was naturally inclined toward the foolery of the magazines. His love of horseplay is evident as early as 1799 when he

writes to his younger sister to explain how his headmaster Mr. Collins has accidentally struck him with a cane. 'Little Harman Minor wanted his hat', he explains,

which hung over Collins's head. Wilbraham asked for the cane to reach it him, which Coll. refused, and at the same time, to give a little strength (I suppose) to his refusal, and to enforce his authority as a *master*, endeavoured to hit him on the shoulder (as *he* says); but how shall I relate the sequel? On poor Ego did it fall. Say, Muse, what could inspire the cane with such a direful purpose? But not on my shoulder, on my *pate* it fell - unhappy *pate*! worthy of a better fate! Do you see that *pate* and *fate* rhyme, ay?¹⁷

De Quincey was not yet the 'English Opium-Eater' or 'X.Y.Z.' but he does sign this letter 'Tabitha Quincey.' The questions, the parenthetical asides, the linguistic high jinks are all part of his attempt to amuse. The young letter writer is already honing the ploys of the future magazinist.

De Quincey's magazine manner was further developed when, at seventeen, he spent several weeks in Wales chatting to tourists, farmers and newly-made friends. 'I enjoyed these two peculiar gifts for conversation', he writes in the revised *Confessions*:

first, an inexhaustible fertility of topics, and therefore of resources for illustrating or for varying any subject that chance or purpose suggested; secondly, a prematurely awakened sense of *art* applied to conversation. I had learned the use of vigilance in evading with civility the approach of wearisome discussions, and in impressing, quietly and oftentimes imperceptibly, a new movement upon dialogues that loitered painfully, or see-sawed unprofitably....The chief demand was for new facts, or new views, or for views newly-coloured impressing novelty upon old facts. To throw in a little of the mysterious every now and then was useful, even with

those that by temperament were averse to the mysterious; pointed epigrammatic sayings and jests – even somewhat worn – were useful; a seasonable quotation in verse was always effective; and illustrative anecdotes diffused a grace over the whole movement of the dialogue.

The periodical writer is again plainly visible in this glimpse of the youthful De Quincey. Indeed, De Quincey's summary of the features of his conversations might be taken as a prospectus for a great many of his essays: 'civility', 'new facts, or new views', 'a little of the mysterious every now and then', 'pointed epigrammatic sayings', 'jest...somewhat worn', 'a seasonable quotation' and 'illustrative anecdotes' to diffuse 'a grace over the whole.' De Quincey notes that the result of this method of conversation was that he 'became exceedingly popular within [his] narrow circle of friends.'¹⁸

When De Quincey began to write for the magazines he adapted and refined his natural sense of jocosity and conversational art to suit the diverse demands of the reading public. He presents himself often as the 'English Opium-Eater', a persona that blends the melancholy with the notorious and the scholarly. De Quincey signs this cognomen to everything from a note on 'English Dictionaries' to his Gothic novel *Klosterheim*.

But the crafting of a marketable public image was only the first step. De Quincey had other talents which suited the magazines. In 1829 William Blackwood wrote that his 'great difficulty' was 'keeping back what may be called good articles, and obtaining articles of a novel and striking kind.'¹⁹ How he must have smiled when De Quincey submitted 'On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts' or 'Toilette of the Hebrew Lady.' Edgar Allan Poe, in 'How to Write A Blackwood Article', has Mr. Blackwood explain to Miss Zenobia "the details

necessary in composing what may be denominated a genuine Blackwood article of the sensation stamp – the kind which you will understand me to say I consider the best for all purposes". "The first thing requisite is to get yourself into such a scrape as no one ever got into before", says Mr. Blackwood.

....If you have no oven, no big bell, at hand, and if you cannot conveniently tumble out of a balloon, or be swallowed up in an earthquake, or get stuck fast in a chimney, you will have to be contented with simply imagining some similar misadventure. I should prefer, however, that you have the actual facts to bear you out....'Truth is strange', you know, 'stranger than fiction' – besides being more to the purpose."²⁰

De Quincey would have known Blackwood's proclivity for the 'striking' and the 'novel' and he produced articles specifically to this end.

De Quincey also knew how to sensationalise material. He wrote an autobiography but entitled it a 'Confession.' He dealt often with murders and violence and revenge. His essays often commence with sentences like 'a great revolution has taken place in Scotland' or 'never yet did a great country more plainly stand in the circumstances of a crisis – vast, rapid and decisive – than the England of 1835.' 'Revolt of the Tartars' begins:

There is no great event in modern history, or, perhaps it may be said more broadly, none in all history from its earliest records, less generally known, or more striking to the imagination, than the flight eastwards of a principal Tartar nation across the boundless *steppes* of Asia in the latter half of the last century.²¹

De Quincey knew how to give his interest in politics, history and himself the kind of flair sought by both editors and readerships.

De Quincey was also a master of marketable gossip. His *Recollections* of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey for *Tait's* are magazine articles *par excellence*. In December, 1808 Dorothy Wordsworth writes, 'Mr. De Q. will stay with us, we hope, at least till the Spring. We feel often as if he were one of the Family.'²² A little over three decades later De Quincey was turning confidential, fireside conversation into magazine copy and selling it for profit to *Tait's*. The Wordsworths were deeply offended, and understandably so. It could not have been pleasant to read De Quincey's comments on Wordsworth's public displays of 'possible ill-humour and peevishness', or Mrs. Wordsworth's 'considerable obliquity of vision' or how the Wordsworth family seemed particularly susceptible to premature aging. De Quincey describes how on one occasion Wordsworth's 'intense impatience for one minute's delay' led him to cut the 'unsunned' leaves of a new book with a greasy knife. He also relates how Dorothy once observed William walking at a distance beside 'Mr. J-, a fine towering figure' and at intervals exclaimed 'in a tone of vexation, "Is it possible? - can that be William? How very mean he looks!"':²³

De Quincey's articles on Coleridge and Southey made similarly indiscreet disclosures. According to Carlyle, the *Recollections* enraged Southey, who urged Hartley Coleridge to 'take a strong cudgel, proceed straight to Edinburgh, and give De Quincey, publicly on the streets there, a sound beating - as a calumniator, cowardly spy, traitor, base betrayer of the social hearth, for one thing!'²⁴

Yet while they offended many, De Quincey's various anecdotes and asides are of a kind peculiarly delightful to the prying outsider. Harriet Martineau comments on the 'grotesque air' of De Quincey's 'evil-speaking'²⁵ but the articles were a great success. Their appeal is grounded in the fact that they act as a kind of leveller, bringing famous

intellectual giants like Coleridge and Wordsworth down to the same humdrum stature as the rest of us. De Quincey's admiration of the two men is evident throughout but he caters to the fact that we derive pleasure in knowing that even the great have foibles and warts. We learn from an acute and intelligent observer what it was like to listen to Coleridge and Wordsworth, to eat with them, walk with them, live with them, to benefit from their kindness and to endure their hostility. De Quincey's presentation is the antithesis of hagiographic and captivating for that reason. Perhaps a need for money drove him to the enterprise in the first place but De Quincey knew what the public wanted and he knew how to produce it in a highly readable form. Even a close family friend of the Wordsworths like Henry Crabb Robinson found the articles 'scandalous, but painfully interesting.'²⁶ Predictably, the response of the public was the same. De Quincey was loudly condemned but most waited eagerly for the next instalment.

De Quincey also suited the Magazines because he had enough bile in him to become an able assassin in the literary wars. When editor of the *Westmorland Gazette* he sometimes lashed his political opponents to the point where Lord Lowther, one of the *Gazette's* founders, worried that 'the Enemy' might gain 'the advantage ground of good breeding.' In an extraordinary letter of 1820 De Quincey urged Wilson to attack John Scott in the columns of *Blackwood's*. 'Make an example of the Bugger', he writes.

Lampoon him in songs - in prose - by day and by night
- in prosperous and adverse fortune. Make him date
his ruin from Nov. 1st. 1820.....I do so loathe the vile
whining canting hypocrisy of the fellow [who] carries
the bestialities of Radicalism into literature....oh!
slave - oh! bugger!²⁷

Three years later De Quincey published an acerbic attack on Carlyle's translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, complete with the observation that 'not the baseness of Egyptian superstition, not Titania under enchantment, not Caliban in drunkenness, ever shaped to themselves an idol more weak and hollow than modern Germany has set up for its worship in the person of Goethe.' '[De Quincey] carries a laudanum bottle in his pocket; and the venom of a wasp in his heart' was Carlyle's opinion.²⁸ During the years surrounding the 1832 Reform Bill De Quincey hammered out the belligerent Tory line in a series of articles for both *Blackwood's* and the *Post*.

Finally, De Quincey was a skilled magazinist because he was so able to make even intensely felt opinions and emotions suit strikingly disparate contexts. There is a strong element of 'play' in his writings. De Quincey describes 'play' as the ability 'to hang upon one's own thoughts as an object of conscious interest, to play with them, to watch and pursue them through a maze of inversions, evolutions, and harlequin changes.' 'Play' is the sense one has that De Quincey is incessantly petting, distorting, spinning and teasing his own material. Wilson recognised De Quincey's skill at varying the subject but retaining the same tone and thought this made him particularly well suited to write for the *Quarterly*. 'I need not say to you that a certain moderated tone must be assumed by every writer in the *Quarterly*,' he states. 'You know what that is, and how to strike that tone on a different instrument from that generally sounded.' In 1830 De Quincey himself boasted of his 'advantages of power and versatility far beyond competition for Periodic Literature.'²⁹

De Quincey knew how to modify his interest in the identity of Junius to accord with a weekly like the *Post* or a monthly like *Tait's*. De Quincey's three articles in the *Post* on Junius and his two

discussions of Junius in *Tait's* are all of about the same length. But the *Post* articles are better organized, less digressive and simpler in style than the *Tait's* articles. In the newspaper De Quincey is occasionally amusing but he is primarily intent on presenting information to convince us that Sir Philip Francis was Junius:

I. - Whosoever wrote the letters of Junius, it is clear beyond all doubt, must have had a close connexion with the WAR-OFFICE....II. - Early in 1772 the Letters of Junius cease. Is there any incident in the life of Francis which would account for this cessation?....III. - It is a very remarkable circumstance about Junius, especially connecting it with his known admiration of Lord Chatham, that he practices a uniform forbearance toward Lord Holland.³⁰

De Quincey systematically works his way through no fewer than twenty of these points in order to try and establish the identity of Junius.

In the magazine the situation is reversed. De Quincey presents some evidence regarding Francis but his overriding concern is to entertain. "You, then, are Junius?", he writes.

"You are that famous man who has been missing since 1772? And you can prove it? God bless me! sir, what a long time you've been sleeping: everybody's gone to bed from that generation. But let us have a look at you, before you move off to prison. I like to look at clever men, - particularly men that are *too* clever; and you, my dear sir, are too clever by half. I regard you as the brightest specimen of the swell-mob, and in fact as the very ablest scoundrel that at this hour rests in Europe unchanged!"³¹

By and large newspapers wanted facts and magazines wanted fun. De Quincey manipulated his interest in Junius to serve these two different purposes.

De Quincey's gift for 'play' enabled him to adapt the various pieces of his autobiography to at least five different contexts: the *London*, *Blackwood's*, *Tait's*, *Hogg's Instructor* and his own *Collected Works*. Oftentimes two different contexts are used to rehearse the same material, as in the deeply sorrowful *Suspiria* version of Elizabeth's death as published in *Blackwood's* and the lighter *Autobiographical Sketches* version as published in the *Collected Works*. The difference between these two renderings is one of intensity and involvement. De Quincey is immersed in sorrow in the one version and partially detached from it in the other. 'De Quincey is on guard in his *Autobiographical Sketches*,' Elizabeth Bruss points out, 'ready to prove that he is not blinded by self-interest, willing to turn his sorrows into jokes....There are temptations to ridicule overblown childish anxieties in the *Suspiria* as well, but they are cut off by a powerful empathy which breeds respect for any human pain.'³²

De Quincey manufactured his two versions of *Confessions* for widely different contexts. The work first appeared in the *London* for September and October, 1821. Hazlitt, Lamb, Thomas Hood, John Clare and T.G. Wainwright were all contributing to the *London* at this time. The magazine was distinguished by a strong spirit of reciprocity, initiated by the first editor, John Scott, and fostered by both the varied talents of the different writers and the convivial monthly dinners most of them attended. Each contributor seemed to stimulate the others to new heights of reflection, wit, pathos and insight. The *London* was both the product of separate essays and a dynamic interplay between them. 'The *Lond. Mag.* is chiefly pleasant to me', Lamb told the second editor John Taylor, 'because some of my friends write in it. I hope Hazlitt intends to go on with it, we cannot spare Table Talk.'³³

It was into this intellectual and imaginative environment that De Quincey entered in the summer of 1821. He was introduced to Taylor by Lamb's lawyer friend Thomas Noon Talfourd. Before long, he had expanded an 'Opium article'³⁴ he had originally thought of submitting to *Blackwood's* into a masterful piece of conversational introspection that deftly caught the tone of the *London*: 'I here present you, courteous reader, with the record of a remarkable period in my life: according to my application of it, I trust that it will prove, not merely an interesting record, but, in a considerable degree, useful and instructive.'³⁵ Like much of his writing, De Quincey produced the *Confessions* because he needed money. But the pensiveness, sensationalism, originality and intellectualism of the piece suited the *London* perfectly, complementing works like Lamb's *Elia* and Hazlitt's *Table Talk* yet at the same time prompting a fertile literary exchange so characteristic of the magazine: Lamb revised his 1813 essay 'Confessions of a Drunkard' and it was issued in the *London* for August, 1822 and shortly thereafter Hazlitt embarked on his own piece of intense autobiographical introspection, *Liber Amoris*. In their original form De Quincey's *Confessions* are a compelling piece of calculated self-revelation tailored to accord with the tone and character of one of the finest literary journals of the nineteenth century.

The revised *Confessions* of 1856 is nearly three times the length of the 1821 version. De Quincey calculated that the original article would only have extended to 'a beggarly amount of 120pp.' in the *Collected Works* while he noted that some of the other volumes had already reached up to '360pp.' 'How could 7s. 6d. be reasonably charged to the public for what obviously was but a third part in bulk of the other volumes?', he asked querulously. 'No remedy remained', he decided, 'but that I should *doctor* the book, and expand it into a

portliness that might countenance its price.' He was quick to insist, however, that nothing was added in 1856 'which did not originally belong to my outline of the work, having been left out chiefly through hurry at the period of first, *i.e.*, original, publication.' De Quincey, then, had mixed motives for taking the *Confessions* from 'its original fragmentary state to its present full-blown development.'³⁶

Yet though he makes no mention of it, a separate factor encouraging him to expand the work must have been his realization that his context and audience were now different. De Quincey was no longer driven by debt nor was he trying to fashion a specific article to a standard length for an established magazine with a high literary reputation and a distinct house style. He had by now reached the stage of venerable old author and with an almost free hand he was labouring to produce a definitive version of his most famous essay for his own *Collected Works*. What is more, the audience of the *London* had been an intelligent and relatively small group of well-informed liberals. The audience De Quincey was now catering to was a much larger mass, less clearly defined, less compact and, on the whole, less discriminating. De Quincey would have been acutely aware of these differences and he would have written accordingly. He produced the original *Confessions* to entertain the enlightened audiences of the *London*. He listed different reasons why he expanded the later version but he no doubt changed the work in part to better suit a readership that had ^{been} weaned on adventures like those of David Copperfield and Becky Sharp.

De Quincey's ability to adapt his work is shown most dramatically by the articles he published in *Blackwood's* and *Tait's* during the 1830s and 1840s. In January, 1832, the *Examiner* announced that a new magazine called *Tait's* was soon to 'furnish such an organ to the popular party of Scotland, as is possessed by the Tories in the potent

Blackwood's.³⁷ Over the course of several years De Quincey wrote many political articles for *Blackwood's* but the fact that *Tait's* was radical in politics and established specifically to oppose *Blackwood's* did not prevent him from appearing in that journal as well. Indeed, for nearly two decades De Quincey published repeatedly – and sometimes almost simultaneously – in both journals. *Blackwood's* pieces such as 'Conservative Prospects', 'The Prospects of Britain' and 'Sir Robert Peel's Position on Next Resuming Power' championed Tory dogma. At the same time De Quincey suppressed his Tory biases or massaged them enough to incorporate them into articles for *Tait's* like 'Autobiography of an English Opium-Eater', 'On Christianity as an Organ of Political Movement' and 'A Tory's Account of Toryism, Whiggism, and Radicalism', though in this last instance he overplayed his hand and Tait himself appended a series of sardonic footnotes to take some of the Tory sting out of the article.³⁸ In 1821, Robinson described De Quincey's talents as 'not marketable'³⁹: but marketable was what De Quincey's talents were before almost all else, his remarkable ability to finesse material enabling him to target different niches within one magazine or the same niche in several different magazines. This ability is one of the most distinguishing features of his writing; it certainly allowed him to exploit the diversity and exuberance of the magazine context.

Yet De Quincey's attitude toward his readership, his profession and his essays was decidedly mixed. De Quincey sometimes speaks of his audience with open hostility, complaining of their 'stupidity' or referring to 'the courteous reader, whom we beg also to suppose the most ignorant of readers.' In 1847 he declares to his daughter Florence that his 'plans far transcend all journalism high or low. And through fifty different channels I will soon make this mob of a public hear on both sides of its deaf head things that it will not like.' A year later, in

an essay on 'Oliver Goldsmith', he writes: 'A mob is a dreadful audience for chafing and irritating the latent vulgarisms of the human heart. Exaggeration and caricature, before such a tribunal, become inevitable, and sometimes almost a duty.'⁴⁰ Elsewhere he rejects the idea that a writer has an obligation toward 'the unlearned' portion of his audience and damns the education of the lower classes as 'miserably shallow' and 'unavailing for any purpose of real elevation.' 'This audience', he growls,

changed in no respect from its former condition of intellect and manners and taste, bringing only the single qualification of ability to read, is now strong enough in numbers to impress a new character upon literature in so far as literature has as motive for applying itself to *their* wants. The consequences are showing themselves, and *will* show themselves more broadly.⁴¹

But De Quincey was also capable of fawning over his audiences. 'It is treason in a writer', he says, '...to produce hatred or disaffection towards his liege lord who is and must be his reader.' He is particularly anxious about his 'female readers...whom only', he writes in 'Memorial Chronology', 'I contemplate in every line of this little work.' And on at least one occasion De Quincey admits that as the readerships of the nineteenth century steadily increase, so does an author's responsibility toward them. 'An attention to the unlearned part of an audience', he argues in 1853,

which 15 years ago might have rested upon pure courtesy, now rests upon a basis of absolute justice....Formerly...the learned reader would have told me that I was not entitled to delay *him* by elucidations....At present, half-way on our pilgrimage through the nineteenth century, I reply to such a learned remonstrant - that it gives me pain to annoy

him by superfluous explanations, but that, unhappily, this infliction of tedium upon *him* is inseparable from what has now become a duty to others.⁴²

De Quincey often complained about having to write for the magazines. In 1818 he declared himself 'in possession of *original* knowledge' and bitterly resented having 'to commence trading author.' The transience of the medium irked him, 'the absolute certainty that each successive month washes out of the public mind every trace of what may have occupied it in any previous month.'⁴³ The press was not rigorous enough in its language or its logic⁴⁴ and too many people 'surrendered their opinion and their literary consciences' to the *Edinburgh*.⁴⁵ De Quincey complained incessantly of the press's 'harsh peremptory punctuality' and he argued that the radical reputation and limited circulation of *Tait's* had severely restricted the spread of his own reputation, especially amongst those classes of 'leisure and wealth.'⁴⁶ Writing for the periodicals - even the more prestigious reviews - was not thought a reputable occupation. After twenty-five years as editor of the *Edinburgh* Jeffrey was still worried about 'being considered as fairly articulated to a trade that is not perhaps the most respectable.' When J.G. Lockhart was given the opportunity to edit a newspaper, his father-in-law Walter Scott told him flatly, 'Your connection with any newspaper would be a disgrace and degradation. I would rather sell gin to the poor people and poison them that way.' In 1825 Mrs. De Quincey wrote to her son: 'I cannot expect that your literary productions either as a Translator or an Author will rise in moral tone to my point, for I suppose you must please your Readers, and unfortunately little is required.'⁴⁷ De Quincey's relationship with his mother was not a warm one, but at times he shared her dislike for his profession.

Yet often De Quincey praises the press. In 1835 he applauds the 'energy, vigilance, sagacity, perseverance...of...our political press' and in 1843 he declares it a 'mere impossibility...that any but men of honour and sensibilities and conspicuous talent, and men brilliantly accomplished in point of education, should become writers or editors of a *leading* journal, or indeed of any daily journal.' In 1850 he is still trumpeting 'that great innovating principle started by [*Blackwood's*], under which it oscillated pretty equally between human life on the one hand and literature on the other.' In 1858 he observes that over the past 'fifty and odd years' a vast expansion in the ability of the press to communicate information quickly has enabled it to bind together all of Europe. 'So travels the press to victory', he cries: 'such is the light, and so broad, which it diffuses: such is the strength for action by which it combines the hearts of nations!'⁴⁸ The publisher James Hogg described De Quincey as 'a keen, omnivorous reader of the newspapers.' In his *Autobiographical Sketches* De Quincey explains that he is fascinated by the daily journals because they reveal to the watchful eye

the dreadful truth of what is going on for ever under the thick curtains of domestic life, close behind us, and before us, and all around us. Newspapers are evanescent, and are too rapidly recurrent, and people see nothing great in what is familiar, nor can ever be trained to read the silent and the shadowy in what, for the moment, is covered with the babbling garrulity of daylight.⁴⁹

George Eliot echoes this sentiment some years later in *Middlemarch*:

That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind; and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and

feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity.⁵⁰

De Quincey was entertained, educated and awed by the agencies of the periodical press.

De Quincey's need to earn money occasionally makes him indifferent to the form or the fate of what he writes. 'Do not scruple out of any tenderness for my trouble, to cut away - without limit', he tells John Taylor: ' - whatever best suits the interests of the Mag. is what I am...bound to like best - and *do* like best.' Some years later he states of 'The Avenger', 'I have no author's vanity connected with any part whatsoever - any passage or any incident: so that they [Blackwood's friends] need feel under no sort of restraint or reserve or scruple in canceling [sic] or correcting upon the widest scale.' De Quincey was similarly flexible regarding 'Niebuhr', 'The Household Wreck', 'Dilemmas of the Corn Law Question' and *Klosterheim*.⁵¹

Most frequently, however, De Quincey takes a great interest in the fate of what he has written. He once described himself as 'writing, cancelling, rewriting' as part of 'this long doing and undoing.' Often he urges editors to reject one of his articles if on reflection he feels it a failure.⁵² He complains bitterly when alterations are made to his work without his permission, or when editors refuse to let him correct or recast the proof copies of an article. 'Who is answerable for the beauty, for the grandeur, for the effect of my papers?', he asks angrily after an editor had cut away 'one-half' of an article. 'My name is there: *his* is not.'⁵³ In 1840 William Tait writes to Mrs. Johnson:

I can only say that [De Quincey] has always told me that he composes *very slowly*...Further, I know that

the quantities of what he brought me at times when I knew he was anxious to write as much as he could showed that he did not compose with rapidity or hurry; for they were small as compared to the time he took to produce them.⁵⁴

Near the end of his career De Quincey himself tells the publisher Hogg:

Here, as always, I have written my best. That is, given the conditions under which I wrote, which conditions might chance to be very unfavourable - hurry, for example, exhaustion, dissatisfaction with my subject, &c., and latterly overwhelming nervousness - these allowed for, always I have striven to write as well as I could.⁵⁵

Though circumstances occasionally forced De Quincey to make selling a work his exclusive concern, characteristically he laboured hard to write well.

Nevertheless, these labours almost invariably took place within the practices and restrictions of the magazine form. Nothing can offset the fact that without penury and Blackwood's boy banging at his door De Quincey might not have written at all. But when he did write, it was to please a magazine audience. It is critical commonplace to call De Quincey 'flawed' or to attribute 'many of his characteristic faults' to the magazine 'mode of publication.'⁵⁶ But De Quincey was simply doing his job. What today are called his 'flaws' were the very characteristics that made him so popular with nineteenth-century magazine audiences. Editors expected him to be facetious, pedantic, confessional, indiscreet and outlandish. That is what they were paying him for. The magazine medium was a circus and De Quincey was one of its star performers. He worked diligently at most of his articles and he usually took a keen interest in their fate. But his guiding principle was what would please the gallery. He no doubt spent

countless hours painstakingly crafting passages that stopped the show back then but today, when judged out of context, are dismissed as simply bombastic, pedantic or facetious.

Not everything De Quincey wrote for the magazines is characterised by foolery. In some articles he bows only reluctantly to this Tutelary, in others he avoids her altogether. Sometimes she forms a minor but integral element in the overall mosaic. *The English Mail-Coach* is a compelling piece of mythology in which De Quincey blends the psychological, the analytical and the apocalyptic. Yet it is also a consciously wrought magazine article, a deliberate combination of high jinks, digressions, histrionics, pathos and humour. De Quincey elaborates at length on the import of his own experience both within and without the world of dreams but he also sculpts and manipulates this material to suit the conventions of the magazine medium. In his best essays he is both exuberant and sustained enough to content most nineteenth and twentieth-century readers.

Suspiria de Profundis was not a success as a magazine article. De Quincey had hoped at one point to publish it as a book but this plan was never realised. What is more, when the piece began to appear in *Blackwood's* in 1845 De Quincey fought bitterly with John Blackwood over space, deadlines and editorial elisions. *Suspiria* appeared in four issues and then disappeared. There were plans to recommence publication some months later but these came to nothing. De Quincey once told James Hogg, "'Don't fire over the heads of this generation. That won't suit your purpose.'" Perhaps, with *Suspiria*, De Quincey fired over the heads of his magazine audience. John Blackwood's combative stance over the issue appears to indicate that he thought so: perhaps, as Lindop puts it, he was 'afraid that the public would find the new distillation too rich and strange for its taste.'⁵⁷

Yet it is revealing that De Quincey never published *Suspiria* as a book and that when he began his *Collected Works* he ransacked the piece for the *Autobiographical Sketches*. During his lifetime, and for many years after, *Suspiria* – what he himself called 'the *ne plus ultra*, as regards the feeling and the power to express it, which I can ever hope to attain'⁵⁸ – existed only in the pages of *Blackwood's*. For better or worse, the magazines invariably got what was best out of De Quincey in a way that no other literary form did. It is fitting that his deepest sighs ascend from their pages. He occasionally chafed but they were his natural environment. They were also his taskmaster and his succour.

Like De Quincey, Hazlitt, Hunt, Southey, Coleridge and Carlyle all wrote for the magazines. But De Quincey is an exception in that he wrote for almost nothing else. Moreover, most of these others writers gave their magazine articles the distinction and respectability of appearing in book form. De Quincey's writings, however, remained almost entirely in the magazines until he began issuing his *Works* late in his career. His natural disposition to jests and linguistic pranks suited him to the magazine medium, as did his ability to finesse different material into the same context or the same material into different contexts. Under the marketable image of the 'Opium-Eater' he crafted articles from the novel and the gossipy to the sensational and the splenetic. De Quincey sometimes complained of his editors or the public or the transience of the form. But the magazines forced work from him in a way that no other medium ever did. Their high-spirits, their diversity and their deadlines made them his natural outlet. When De Quincey wrote it was almost always with one eye fixed steadily on amusing and enlightening his audience.

Chapter III

The Logician: A Syllable Shall Cloud the Judgment of a Council

I both respect and have an affection for Mr De Quincey; but saw too much of his turn of mind, anxious yet dilatory, confused from over-accuracy, & at once systematic and labyrinthine...his natural Tediousness made yet greater by his zeal & fear of not discharging his Trust.

--Coleridge, 1809¹

Thomas De Quincey's preoccupation with analysis is evident throughout his writings. De Quincey defines a philosopher as someone who unites the analytical faculties with moral intuition. As a young man, De Quincey thought of himself as a philosopher. But though he possessed superb intellectual gifts his dreams of philosophical greatness never materialised: gradually they were crushed beneath the weight of his own circumstances, prejudices and temperament. During the first half of his journalistic career De Quincey wrote often on philosophy but his actual knowledge of the area seems surprisingly slight. What is more, he never held up for examination the terms and categories of any philosophical theory, though the formidable analytical talents he did command were ideally suited to such a task. But De Quincey's fascination with analysis does stand firmly behind many of his efforts as a detective and a literary critic and it gives him great ability as a populariser, particularly of economics. Further, his analytical faculty leads him to demand precision in the use of language, though here he is capable of insisting to the point where he becomes

confusing and tedious. Even a highly imaginative work like the *Confessions Trilogy* is marked by his concern with logic and detail.

In *Confessions* De Quincey describes the two main qualities which he 'deems indispensable to the sustaining of any claim to the title of philosopher.' The first is 'not merely the possession of a superb intellect in its *analytic* functions' and here De Quincey pauses to note that

England can for some generations show but few claimants...for this honour....with the exception of *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, and in a narrower department of thought, with the recent illustrious exception of *David Ricardo*.²

De Quincey considers William Hazlitt as a possible 'third exception' to this list but then dismisses him: Hazlitt, De Quincey writes, 'has obviously not had the advantage of a regular scholastic education: he has not read Plato in his youth (which most likely was only his misfortune); but neither has he read Kant in his manhood (which is his fault).'

The second quality De Quincey deems indispensable to a philosopher is 'a constitution of the *moral* faculties, as shall give him an inner eye and power of intuition for the vision and the mysteries of our human nature.'³ De Quincey believes this 'constitution of faculties' is a condition 'which (amongst all the generations of men that from the beginning of time have deployed into life, as it were, upon this planet) our English poets have possessed in the highest degree - and Scottish Professors in the lowest.' De Quincey does not name anyone specifically but he is quite clearly thinking of Wordsworth and Coleridge as primary examples of the 'English poets' and Dugald Stewart and Thomas Brown as the foremost examples of the 'Scottish

professors.⁴ According to the definition, then, De Quincey sees Coleridge as the quintessential philosopher, someone who combines the 'analytic functions' with the 'moral faculties.' More revealing is the fact that, according to the definition, De Quincey sees himself as a philosopher. 'For my own part', he writes in the opening pages of *Confessions*,

without breach of truth or modesty, I may affirm, that my life has been, on the whole, the life of a philosopher: from my birth I was made an intellectual creature: and intellectual in the highest sense my pursuits and pleasures have been, even from my school-boy days.⁵

Then a few pages on, just before he sets down his definition, De Quincey writes that 'the reader will find that the Opium-eater boasteth himself to be a philosopher.'⁶

There can be little question that De Quincey possessed a powerful intellect. His mind was naturally meditative and tenacious. He spent his early years a 'dutiful' child of 'a pure, holy and magnificent church.' As a young boy De Quincey was surrounded by a 'vast' collection of books in the nursery library at Greenhay.⁷ At eight he had access to his father's library. 'It was extensive', he recalls;

comprehending the whole general literature both of England and Scotland for the preceding generation. It was impossible to name a book in the classes of history, biography, voyages and travels, belles lettres, or popular divinity, which was wanting. And to these was added a pretty complete body of local tours...and topography.⁸

At eight, too, De Quincey was a rapacious book-buyer. His mother at this time gave him 'a large weekly allowance of pocket-money, too large for my age', he commented in *Suspiria*, 'but safely entrusted to

myself, who never spent or desired to spend one fraction of it upon any thing but books.' In addition, between his 'eighth and ninth years' De Quincey became aware of a concept that was to form one of the cornerstones in his view of literature: his reading of a passage in 'Phaedrus the AEsopian fabulist' 'first of all revealed to [him] the immeasurableness of the morally sublime.'⁹

At this time, too, De Quincey's first tutor, the Reverend Samuel Hall, began assigning a weekly task designed to greatly develop the powers of memory. 'For upwards of three and a-half years' De Quincey had to repeat back faithfully on Monday the sermon he had heard Hall preach in church on the preceding Sunday. De Quincey later remarked that he found this duty 'odious...in the most abominable excess' but admitted that he drew from it 'the deepest benefits.' 'I found my abstracting and condensing powers sensibly enlarged', he writes in the 1856 *Confessions*.¹⁰

Between Hall and his successor, Mr. Morgan of Bath Grammar School, De Quincey received a solid grounding in the classics. Before he was eleven he had become a skilful Latinist and was writing verses in the manner of Juvenal. At the age of fifteen De Quincey won prizes for translations of Cicero and Horace, the significance of which we shall explore more fully in the next chapter.¹¹ De Quincey possessed even greater talents as a Grecian. According to his own account,

At thirteen, I wrote Greek with ease; and at fifteen my command of that language was so great, that I not only composed Greek verses in lyric metres, but could converse in Greek fluently, and without embarrassment...."That boy", said one of my masters, pointing the attention of a stranger to me, "that boy could harangue an Athenian mob, better than you or I could address an English one."¹²

At thirteen, as well, De Quincey's reading was deep and eclectic: in a 1799 letter to his sister he describes a series of books that were delivered to his mother's house, apparently for him to read. They include "'Asiatic Researches" (Sir William Jones' work), Goldsmith's *Histories of Greece and England*, Milner's "Ecclesiastical History", "Rambler", Hoole's "Orlando Furioso", Hoole's "Tasso", Venn's "Duty of Man", Ogden's "Sermons", &c.' Elsewhere De Quincey comments that at fifteen he was able to discourse eloquently on literature. 'I had immense reading' and 'vast command of words', he recalls of this time.¹³

At Manchester Grammar School De Quincey greatly augmented his intellectual powers. He called his room at the school his "'pensive citadel": here I had read and studied through all the hours of night', he writes in *Confessions*,

and, though...I...had lost my gaiety and happiness, during the strife and fever of contention with my guardians; yet...as a boy, so passionately fond of books, and dedicated to intellectual pursuits, I could not fail to have enjoyed many happy hours in the midst of general dejection.¹⁴

The *Diary* De Quincey kept when he was seventeen reveals him as inquisitive, alert and ironic – light at some points, grave at others. There are moments of introspection: 'I became fully convinced', he avers, 'that one leading trait in my mental character...is – *Facility of Impression*...Above all, witness the strong effects which striking descriptions of the *new sort* have.'¹⁵ De Quincey writes and revises an introductory letter to Wordsworth: 'Your name is with me for ever linked to the lovely scenes of nature; – and that not yourself only but that each place and object you have mentioned...to me "Are dearer than the sun!"'¹⁶ De Quincey comments on Thomas Chatterton, the *Edinburgh*

Review, the mind of Lord Bacon and 'the incompatibility of eternal punishment - first with God's *justice* and secondly with his mercy.'¹⁷ He projects, among other things, '*A pathetic tale*, of which a black man is the hero', '*An essay on poetry*', '*An essay on character*', '*A life of Julius Caesar*', '*An Ode* in which two angels or spirits were to meet in the middle of the Atlantic' and '*A poetic and pathetic ballad* reciting the wanderings of two young children (brother and sister) and their falling asleep on a frosty - moonlight night among the lanes...and so perishing.'¹⁸ By the time of the *Diary*, too, De Quincey displays that intellectual aggressiveness that distinguishes many of his later essays and so irritated contemporaries like Robinson, Carlyle and Lockhart.¹⁹ De Quincey remarks, for example, on 'the wretched drivellings of that old dotard *Homer*.' He transcribes a conversation with family friends in which he 'observed that neither *Fenelon* nor *Addison* knew how to draw a character and proceeded to instance *Cato*, who, I said, had no one trait in his character but that of being dead to all human feelings.'²⁰ The *Diary* begins with De Quincey commenting:

The intimate connection, which [exists between the] body and the mind, has never (to my knowledge) been [suf]ficiently enlarged on in theory or insisted on in practise....But on the present occasion it would be almost superfluous; because, throughout the whole of the following system, I suppose previously that the reader admits the fundamental points on which it is grounded; and, even though he should not, I don't care a damn.²¹

Soon after the *Diary* breaks off De Quincey went up to Oxford and here his intellectual advance continued unabated. His knowledge of contemporary British literature now encompassed authors like Lamb and Landor. He took Hebrew lessons from a man named Schwartzburg and he delved deeply into German literature and philosophy by studying

the works of writers such as Herder, Schiller, Richter and Kant.²² In 1808, when it came time for his examinations De Quincey offered as his subject the whole of Greek literature. He bolted, of course, halfway through the examinations procedure but not before one of his examiners described him as 'the cleverest man I ever met with.'²³ When, in 1809, De Quincey moved into Dove Cottage his library was nearing five thousand volumes²⁴ and he had entered a period of close association with Wordsworth and Coleridge, whose influence on him was to be so great. In 1810 De Quincey was 'amusing' himself 'by reading, in their chronological order, the great classical circumnavigations of the earth.' In 1811 he looked 'into loads of books and pamphlets on many branches of economy' and he also began 'studying the Danish.'²⁵ In 1814, De Quincey was in London to read for the Bar. Robinson described him at this time as possessing 'a fine and very superior mind.'²⁶ In 1815 De Quincey journeyed with Wilson to Edinburgh and met Lockhart, James Hogg and others. R.P. Gillies heard De Quincey's conversation at this time and was amazed by its range and grace: 'The talk might be of "beeves"', Gillies remembers,

and [De Quincey] could grapple with them if expected to do so, but his musical cadences were not in keeping with such work, and in a few minutes (not without some strictly logical sequence) he could escape at will from beeves to butterflies, and thence to the soul's immortality, to Plato, and Kant, and Schelling, and Fichte, to Milton's early years, and Shakespeare's sonnets, to Wordsworth and Coleridge, to Homer and AEschylus, to St. Thomas of Aquin, St. Basil, and St. Chrysostom.²⁷

Six years later in London, Richard Woodhouse was similarly impressed: 'The Opium-eater appears to have read a great deal and to have thought much more', Woodhouse writes. 'I was astonished at the depth and

reality, if I may so call it, of his knowledge. He seems to have passed nothing that occurred in the course of his study unreflected on or unremembered.²⁸

To his deep and diverse knowledge of intellectual matters De Quincey added a body of experience that he felt had given him 'an inner eye and power of intuition for the vision and the mysteries of our human nature.' When still a young man De Quincey's experience of people and places was extensive, almost bizarre. He had conversed with George III²⁹ and he had walked the avenues of London with prostitutes. He had lived in big cities like Manchester and had slept in the open fields of Wales. He had been an outcast and he had chatted with his mother's Evangelical friends. Opium had caused 'an apocalypse of the world within [him]!' He had been willing to sacrifice 'even his life' for Wordsworth's friendship. He expressed his sense of bereavement in terms of his sister Elizabeth and of the prostitute Ann. He had whored in Liverpool³⁰ and he had sat with Dorothy Wordsworth in Grasmere 'quietly turning over the leaves of a Greek book.'³¹ He had seen some people vilely treated and he had himself been treated with great kindness. De Quincey believed all these experiences had honed his '*moral* faculties.' In 1819 he told the readers of the *Westmorland Gazette*, 'The Editor has had an opportunity from his earliest youth, of mixing freely in all ranks of society to that extent which he has declared necessary for a political author.'³² Three years later in *Confessions* De Quincey makes it clear that 'mixing freely in all ranks of society' is equally necessary for a philosopher. 'At no time of my life', he avers,

have I been a person to hold myself polluted by the touch or approach of any creature that wore a human shape: on the contrary, from my very earliest youth it has been my pride to converse familiarly, *more*

Socratico, with all human beings, man, woman, and child, that chance might fling in my way: a practice which is friendly to the knowledge of human nature, to good feelings, and to that frankness of address which becomes a man who would be thought a philosopher. For a philosopher should not see with the eyes of the poor liminary creature calling himself a man of the world, and filled with narrow and self-regarding prejudices of birth and education, but should look upon himself as a Catholic creature, and as standing in equal relation to high and low - to educated and uneducated, to the guilty and the innocent.³³

In his early life - indeed all through his life - chance flung a good deal in De Quincey's way. Throughout his writings he examines at great length the impulses and complexities of the human heart in the 'high and the low', the 'educated and uneducated' and, particularly, 'the guilty and the innocent.'

To a wide base of knowledge and experience De Quincey added a preoccupation with the '*analytic* functions': more than any other writer of the age, De Quincey relished defining terminologies, hunting for logical errors, pointing to inconsistencies, dwelling on imprecision and emphasising subtle differences of meaning. Indeed, De Quincey can write on no topic without the analytical strand of his intellect asserting itself in some form or other. De Quincey believed his mind was 'predisposed to subtleties of all sorts and degrees.' In his 'Dialogues of Three Templars' he stressed that 'the course' of his studies had led him 'to cultivate the scholastic logic....the Aristotelian forms and the exquisite science of distinctions matured by the subtilty of the schoolmen.' In *Confessions* De Quincey writes that he 'doated on logical accuracy of distinction' and later adds: 'my proper vocation, as I well knew, was the exercise of the analytical understanding.' In his

essay on 'Protestantism' De Quincey declares simply: 'In matters of logic, I hold myself impeccable.'³⁴

While he undoubtedly possessed powerful analytical skills, his great desire to exercise them frequently results in his meaning becoming lost amidst gratuitous cavilling and a series of hair-splitting distinctions. Virginia Woolf notes wryly that

when the nature of [De Quincey's] narrative compels him to state certain ordinary facts they become gigantically ridiculous, like boots seen in an elongated mirror; when he laughs you see a pre-historic monster on its hind legs. And it is one of the weaknesses of this copious mind, a sensitive spot in its splendid equipment, that it cannot pass by an allusion or a statement that is capable of further explanation without setting down the whole burden of the story and proceeding to remove the imperceptible pebble, elaborately, from the readers' path.³⁵

De Quincey's logical faculty sometimes reveals striking details and subtle inaccuracies. But frequently his attempts to be crystal clear succeed only in muddying the water.

What is more, an over-zealous logical faculty is not the only factor that undermines his intellectual pretensions. By 1815, 'the last penny' of his fortune 'was gone': debt, ill-health and squalor soon began to sap his strength. 'Up to the middle of' 1817 De Quincey 'judged himself to have been a happy man' but then his opium addiction completely overwhelmed him and 'for nearly two years', he shudders, 'I believe that I read no book but one.' In an 1818 letter to his mother De Quincey describes himself as one 'in possession of *original* knowledge not derived from books' and declares that he is 'indisposed to sell [his] knowledge for money, and to commence trading author.'³⁶ But later that same year he takes up the editorship of the *Westmorland Gazette*

and begins over four decades as a writer for the periodical press. In that same 1818 letter to his mother he writes,

My ambition was, that by long and painful labour, combining with such faculties as God had given me, I might become the intellectual benefactor of my species. I hoped, and have every year hoped with better grounds, that (if I should be blessed with life sufficient) I should accomplish a great revolution in the intellectual condition of the world, - that I should, both as one cause and as one effect of that revolution, place education upon a new footing throughout all civilised nations, was but one part of this revolution: it was also but a part (though it may seem singly more than enough for a whole) to be the first founder of a true Philosophy: and it was no more than a part that I hoped to be the re-establisher in England (with great accessions) of Mathematics.³⁷

By 1818, through 'long and painful labour', De Quincey had amassed enormous stores of knowledge on a wide variety of subjects. But once poverty, opium and the periodical treadmill became a way of life, his intellectual aspirations began to narrow and fracture beyond recognition.

When writing articles for the magazines De Quincey was often forced to rely on a remarkable but imperfect memory. He claimed that he insisted 'upon absolute precision' and wished 'always to be punctiliously accurate.' Indeed, he once described himself as a man who valued 'above all things, the reputation for veracity.'³⁸ But De Quincey repeatedly found himself in a situation where he was driven to compose without adequate reference material. Consequently, many of his papers are riddled with inaccuracies: in countless instances his quotations are incorrect, his dates are imprecise and his facts are confused or conflated. Worse still, the need for magazine copy occasionally forced him into plagiarism or a kind of disingenuous



boasting in which he praised his own abilities of elucidation while disparaging those of a source that he was actually heavily dependent upon. Goldman, for example, has shown that De Quincey's essays on 'Shakespeare', 'Schiller' and 'Goethe' are victims of poor source material with the result that not only does De Quincey resort to plagiarism, but he indulges in a good deal of bluster and prevarication in an attempt to cover up various other shortcomings.³⁹

One of the ironies of De Quincey's career is that the periodical medium both displayed and undermined his intellectual abilities. De Quincey was certainly not capable of the kind of sustained thought needed to become 'the first founder of a true Philosophy' and if he had not been driven to write for the magazines he likely would have drifted on in Dove Cottage and written nothing at all. He himself admits as much: 'in 1821', he states, 'I went up to London avowedly for the purpose of exercising my pen, as the one sole source then open to me for extricating myself from a special embarrassment (failing which case of dire necessity, I believe that I should never have written a line for the press).'⁴⁰ On the other hand, once shackled to the magazine mill the need to produce articles that would sell encouraged De Quincey to take his knowledge and lighten it and break it up to a far greater extent than he otherwise would have done. Such tactics made him a successful magazinist but they also gave him the justification for never sitting down and recording the depth and range of what he actually knew.

Finally, De Quincey's intellectual claims are subverted by his prejudices - particularly as regards the church. De Quincey was, 'not by birth and breeding only, but upon the deliberate adoption of my judgment, an affectionate son of [the Church of England], in respect to her doctrines, her rites, her discipline, and her internal government'

and he believed, for example, that 'beyond the boundary and ring fence of an ultimate faith in the capital articles of revealed truth no man can trespass without a risk of losing his compass; he cannot speculate safely so far as that.' De Quincey also declared: 'Neither can I think that any man...ever could tower upwards into a very great philosopher unless he should begin or should end with Christianity. Kant is a dubious exception.'⁴¹ De Quincey's adamant faith in the truth of Christianity blocked the free movement of his thought. His intellect, then, was capacious, diversified, penetrating and logical. But it was also digressive, harassed and prejudiced. It is an odd combination of assets and liabilities and it produces a few essays of striking scholarly success and many others of unqualified scholarly failure. What is more, while some passages in De Quincey do profitably combine the '*analytical*' functions' with 'the *moral*' faculties', his claim in *Confessions* to the title of philosopher can not be sustained in anything like the technical sense.

The failure of De Quincey as a philosopher is borne out fully by his many essays and remarks on philosophy and philosophers. Christian prejudice and arrogance led De Quincey to take a strikingly negative view of some of the greatest philosophers.⁴² Plato is a prime example. De Quincey argues that 'Plato is neither methodic nor systematic' and 'too many' of his speculations are 'without a shadow of coherency, and at every angle presenting some fresh incongruity.'⁴³ In Plato, De Quincey states, there is 'mysticism', 'vagueness of purpose' and 'many blank contradictions and startling inconsistencies.' At one point De Quincey calls Plato a 'fool.'⁴⁴ De Quincey is almost as disparaging about Hobbes. 'We privately hate Mr. Thomas Hobbes, of Malmsbury', De Quincey asserts; 'we know much evil of him, and we could expose many of his tricks effectually.' In De Quincey's opinion, Hobbes has 'the gift

of shallowness.⁴⁵ De Quincey also dislikes Locke, though it was fashionable in his day to dislike Locke and his many derogatory comments probably owe as much to the prevailing intellectual trend as they do to any opinions that he formulated on his own.⁴⁶ 'As to Locke', De Quincey declares at one point, 'I, when a boy, had made a discovery of one blunder full of laughter and of fun, which, had it been published and explained in Locke's lifetime, would have tainted his whole philosophy with suspicion.'⁴⁷

The philosophers he commends are referred to in terms which suggest no special interest on his part. He calls Aristotle, for example, 'that pure starry intelligence.'⁴⁸ He describes Lord Bacon as one of 'the great heroes of philosophy' and believes that 'for subtlety and power no intellect could be named on a level with the Jew Spinoza.' De Quincey refers to Hegel as 'the great master of the impenetrable' and Schelling **As** 'the great Bavarian professor.'⁴⁹ He is an admirer of Leibnitz. 'There are such people as Leibnitzes on this earth', De Quincey states; 'and their office seems not that of planets - to revolve within the limits of one system, but that of comets...to connect different systems together.' Elsewhere De Quincey notes that 'the philosophic style of Leibnitz is excellent.'⁵⁰

Yet nowhere in his writings does De Quincey embark on a detailed consideration of the writings of any of these philosophers. The names of Aristotle, Bacon, Leibnitz and others punctuate his works but their ideas are never explored. His actual knowledge of their writings seems slight.

He was better acquainted with some parts of the writings of Hume and Kant. He praises Hume's 'celebrated essay on the nature of necessary connexion': to De Quincey's mind this essay is 'the seed that has since germinated into the mighty forest of German philosophy.' In

another context De Quincey comments that 'the mere statement of Hume's problem on the idea of necessary connexion...is unquestionably the most remarkable contribution to philosophy ever made by man.' De Quincey was less enthusiastic about Hume's argument on miracles, though his attempt to refute the argument is by his own admission a failure.⁵¹

De Quincey discusses Kant at length. He is alternately attracted and repelled by Kant. As a Christian De Quincey attacks Kant for what he calls his 'habitual contempt for revealed religion': 'Kant...manifestly thinks of Christianity with enmity, - nay, with spite,' De Quincey declares.⁵² At other, more detached moments, however, De Quincey writes with equanimity that Kant was 'the most sincere, honourable, and truthful of human beings' and that his philosophy is 'so comprehensive as to leave no track of legitimate interests untouched, and so profound as to presuppose many preparatory exercises of the understanding.'⁵³ De Quincey's view of Kant vacillates between these two extremes.

Until he arrived in Oxford, De Quincey had read nothing of German philosophy. At first he was excited by what he considered its 'miraculous promise.' 'German literature...seemed, in those days', he recalls

an Eldorado as true and undeceiving as it was evidently inexhaustible. And the central object of this interminable wilderness of what then seemed imperishable bloom and verdure - the very tree of knowledge in the midst of this Eden - was the transcendental philosophy of Immanuel Kant.⁵⁴

But De Quincey was soon disappointed in Kantian philosophy: 'six weeks' study was sufficient to close my hopes in that quarter for ever', he states pointedly. 'The philosophy of Kant...already, in 1805, I found to

be a philosophy of destruction, and scarcely in any one chapter so much as *tending* to a philosophy of reconstruction. It destroys by wholesale, and it substitutes nothing.' De Quincey reports that 'for at least ten long years *after*' this time Kant's 'philosophy shed the gloom of something like misanthropy upon my views and estimates of human nature.'⁵⁵

In *Confessions*, however, De Quincey makes it plain that, despite his dissatisfaction, he continued to read Kant: 'in 1812...as well as for some years previous, I have been chiefly studying German metaphysics, in the writings of Kant, Fichte, Schelling &c.' And when in 1816-17 De Quincey dramatically reduced his opium dosage and 'the cloud of profoundest melancholy which rested upon my brain...drew off in one day' he remarks that he 'read Kant again; and again I understood him, or fancied that I did.'⁵⁶ Further, in the opening two decades of his writing career, De Quincey produces no fewer than ten essays on Kant.⁵⁷

Sackville West claims that in these essays De Quincey shows himself to have 'had, in fact, a remarkable grasp of the Kantian system.' Proctor declares that De Quincey's 'grasp of the main principles and conclusions of the first and second of the three great Critiques cannot be successfully challenged.' Erhardt Essig maintains that 'De Quincey correctly understood Kant's philosophy.'⁵⁸ Rene Wellek, however, argues convincingly that De Quincey's understanding of Kant was minimal. In his 'De Quincey in the History of Ideas', Wellek points to the fact that on different occasions De Quincey confuses "'transcendent" and "transcendental", "transcendental" and *a priori*;' speaks of the categories as "large ideas"; describes Kant as an "Apollyon mind" who propounded a "Ghoulish creed", was "something of a brute", "never read a book in his life" and "lied" to his King.'⁵⁹ Earlier,

in his *Kant in England*, Wellek acknowledges that De Quincey's overall exposition of Kant in 'German Studies and Kant in Particular' is 'not injudicious and fairly correct on many essential points.' Yet, Wellek concludes, De Quincey's

actual knowledge [of Kant] seems to have been gathered very haphazardly...and accordingly the exposition mixes glimpses of truth, shrewd formulas with utter confusion on fundamental questions. De Quincey is one of the few writers who claim a personal experience with Kant. But this experience was based on a gross misunderstanding of the purpose of the Kantian philosophy and then, even if we could grant the right to misunderstand Kant, we feel that this experience, however actual and indisputable, remained only skin-deep, the expression of a mood, of a moment's despair and tedium.⁶⁰

Coleridge is the only other thinker De Quincey considers at any length. In many instances, this consideration leads simply to sniping. De Quincey belittles Coleridge's intellectual gifts, points to examples of Coleridge's plagiarism and mocks Coleridge for his inability to control his opium addiction.⁶¹ Yet in his more balanced moments De Quincey is capable of paying eloquent tribute to an intellect that clearly awed him. In the *Confessions*, as we have seen, Coleridge appears as De Quincey's blueprint of the supreme philosopher. Nearly twenty-five years later De Quincey describes Coleridge as an 'astonishing man' who 'besides being an exquisite poet, a profound political speculator, a philosophic student of literature...was also a circumnavigator of the most pathless waters of scholasticism and metaphysics.'⁶² In his *Posthumous Works* De Quincey discourses directly on Coleridge's abilities as a philosopher. Coleridge 'united perfections that never *were* united but in three persons on this earth', De Quincey states,

in himself, in Plato (as many suppose), and in Schelling, viz., the utmost expansion and in some paths the utmost depths of the searching intellect with the utmost sensibility to the powers and purposes of Art....Had his studies been more systematically directed to one end - my conviction is that he would have left a greater philosophic monument of his magnificent mind than Aristotle, or Lord Bacon or Leibnitz.⁶³

Though spite sometimes enfeebled his judgment, De Quincey considered Coleridge the finest mind and greatest philosopher of the age. But like all his comments on philosophers with perhaps the exception of Kant, De Quincey was largely content to wander and peck rather than examine Coleridge's intellectual achievement in any detail.

To some extent, De Quincey never really intended his claims as a philosopher to be taken seriously. Rather, he adopted the title because he knew it would help him to establish a niche in the minds of editors and audiences. In many of his articles on philosophy - particularly those on Kant - and in a number of other articles on theology and history, De Quincey portrays himself as the scholarly journalist, the intellectual recluse or the neglected philosophical genius, delving into long-forgotten books, spinning new theories and unravelling intricate intellectual problems. 'The Philosopher' was a persona developed by De Quincey, the device of a canny magazinist trying to sell essays, though De Quincey undoubtedly drew the idea for this persona from the public image of his fellow opium addict Coleridge, just as some years later a third opium devotee, Edgar Allan Poe, combined the mystique of Coleridge and De Quincey to create a 'neglected genius' persona of his own. Opium, indeed, is at the heart of 'The Philosopher' persona because it symbolises both the source of inspiration and the reason for enervation. The *Confessions* is subtitled 'an extract from the life of a

scholar' because De Quincey realized the whole record would gain in interest and pathos if he played upon the idea of the great but debilitated 'Philosopher.' In *Confessions*, opium has allowed De Quincey to sip the milk of intellectual paradise yet it has also stripped him of his ability to complete the vast philosophical project to which he had

devoted the labour of my whole life, and had dedicated my intellect, blossoms and fruit...and...to which I had presumed to give the title of an unfinished work of Spinoza's; viz. *De emendatione humani intellectus* ⁶⁴

According to Wellek, De Quincey's philosophical pretensions are largely a journalistic ruse. '[De Quincey's] display of omniscience', he writes,

the pontifical tone, the constant self-congratulations, the mysterious hints at enormous hidden knowledge on faraway subjects (and things German and Kantian were faraway then), the heavy-handed jocularities are not only temperamental failings, but must be explained by conformity to the tone of the magazines for which De Quincey wrote and the hopes which he had to raise in editors and readers. ⁶⁵

De Quincey portrayed himself as 'The Philosopher' because it gave him an identity with periodical audiences.

At the same time, De Quincey genuinely believed he possessed philosophical powers and by the end of his career he lamented the fact that they had not been put to better use. Despite his debt problem and the severity of his opium addiction De Quincey in the 1821 *Confessions* can still say that he 'boasteth himself to be a philosopher.' ⁶⁶ And in the years that follow De Quincey refers to his life, for example, as one that had been 'dedicated and set apart to philosophy' or speaks of himself as one 'whose studies had been chiefly in the field of

philosophy.⁶⁷ By the end of 1841, however, De Quincey has written his last essay on philosophy⁶⁸ and ceased to present himself as devoted to the subject. Then, when revising the *Confessions* in 1856, he drops his boasts of 1821, likely because by this time he felt that they were no longer justified in light of what he had actually accomplished over the past thirty-five years. In 1821, of course, De Quincey was virtually unknown and he could claim almost what he liked for his intellectual abilities: by 1856 he had been before the public for many years and his intellectual achievement – or lack of it – was there for all to see. De Quincey looked back from the vantage point of 1856 and was acutely conscious of the great philosophical plans and pretensions that had failed to materialise. At about the time of the *Confessions* revisions J.R. Findlay reports De Quincey as saying that when he considered the course of his life 'so "stale, flat, and unprofitable" was the retrospect, that he turned away from it "shuddering and ashamed".' Earlier, in 1852, De Quincey told J.T. Fields of 'his baffled efforts, his defeated hopes in life, his unfinished work on the Human Intellect which he had so longed to leave completed as his topmost crowning effort.'⁶⁹ Perhaps as his career progressed and his philosophical aspirations crumbled De Quincey occasionally felt as Coleridge did: 'I have prayed with drops of agony on my Brow', Coleridge writes in a letter of 1814, 'trembling not only before the Justice of my Maker, but even before the Mercy of my Redeemer. "I gave thee so many Talents. What hast thou done with them?"'⁷⁰ De Quincey's mind does not rank with Coleridge's but De Quincey did possess extraordinary intellectual gifts and like Coleridge, those gifts were blighted by temperament, circumstance and opium. In terms of philosophy, De Quincey was not 'in possession of *original* knowledge.' Moreover, the philosophical knowledge he actually possessed likely did make its way piecemeal into his writings. All the

same, the quality of those writing does not do justice, one feels, to the extent of his reading and the meditative and logical powers of his mind. Indeed, one of the most striking aspects of De Quincey's philosophical writings is that he does not make better use of his analytical faculties. De Quincey believes that 'a good terminology will be one of the first results from a good theory; and hence, though a coherent terminology is not a sufficient evidence in favour of a system, the absence of such a terminology is a sufficient evidence against it.'⁷¹ In light of such an assertion, and in light of the fact that he does studiously examine terminology when writing on political economy, it is regrettable that De Quincey never addresses himself to holding up the categories and terms of Leibnitz, Hume, Kant and others to the same kind of scrutiny. The impression he creates is one of hair-splitting and logical quibbling.

De Quincey loves to exercise his logical mind on an enigma. In the opening paragraph of his 'Rosicrucians and the Free-Masons' he details some of the unanswered historical questions that he feels 'furnish occasion, beyond any other form of historical researches, for the display of extensive reading and critical acumen.' De Quincey's list gives revealing evidence of the varied and out of the way nature of much of his reading. He reports, among the 'large body of outstanding problems in history',

1. In reference to *persons*: as those which regard whole nations: - *e.g.* What became of the ten tribes of Israel? Did Brennus and his Gauls penetrate into Greece? Who and what are the Gypsies? or, those, far more in number, which regard individuals, - as the case of the Knights Templars of Mary Stuart, of the Ruthvens (the Gowrie Conspiracy). Who was the man in the Iron Mask? Was the unhappy Lady of the Haystack, who in our own days slept out of doors or in barns up and down Somersetshire, a daughter of the Emperor of Germany? Was Perkin Warbeck three

centuries ago the true Plantagenet? 2. In reference to *things*; as – Who first discovered the Nile? Who built Stonehenge? Who discovered the compass? What was the Golden Fleece? Was the Siege of Troy a romance or a grave historical fact? Was the Iliad the work of one mind, or (on the Wolfian hypothesis) of many?.....Who wrote the letters of Junius? Was the Fluxional Calculus discovered simultaneously by Leibnitz and Newton; or did Leibnitz derive the first hint of it from the letter of Newton?⁷²

De Quincey goes on to ask about such things as 'the Morris dancers' and 'the practice (not yet extinct amongst uneducated people) of saying "God bless you!" on hearing a person sneeze.'

De Quincey wrote often on historical enigmas like these. He was particularly interested in the authorship of the 'Letters of Junius': in six separate instances he considers the question at length.⁷³ He extracts a plausible solution to the passage in Suetonius regarding the two jests of 'Aelius Lamia.'⁷⁴ In his essay on 'Sir William Hamilton' De Quincey rehearses a number of 'perplexities', including one 'paraded by the Greek logicians' and 'known by the title of "Achilles and the Tortoise".' Elsewhere he examines the 'three thousand' year old riddle of 'The Theban Sphinx', the identity of the *Eicon Basilike* or 'the man in the Iron Mask'⁷⁵ and the origins of 'Modern Superstitions' and the 'Rosicrucians and the Free-Masons.' In addition, De Quincey takes three separate essays to explore the question of the historical identity of 'The Essenes', though here his Christian prejudices mean that he embarks on sustained passages of special pleading rather than admit that there is strong evidence to support the proposition that the Essenes were an independent, pre-Christian sect with a strong moral code. The idea of morality before Christianity was unthinkable for De Quincey and his arguments in these three essays illustrate the occasionally resourceful – not to say guileful – tendencies of his

logical mind. De Quincey once criticised a historian for rehearsing 'ancient stories, not with the humble ambition of better adorning them...but of extracting from them some new meaning, and thus forcing them to arrange themselves...as illustrations of some great principle or agency now first revealing its importance.'⁷⁶ This criticism is an remarkably apposite summary of the kind of 'logic' he himself occasionally indulges in: as M.R. Ridley puts it, De Quincey 'will from time to time permit himself the methods of the clever barrister seeking a verdict, instead of those of the honest critic seeking the truth.'⁷⁷ Such methods were adopted by De Quincey not only to persuade or startle his magazine audiences: historical enigmas fascinated him, but he was not above ignoring facts and massaging his logic in order to ensure that his solutions fully supported his own preestablished beliefs.

The logician in De Quincey was enthralled by casuistry. De Quincey defines the term as 'the application of a moral principle to the *cases* arising in human life'⁷⁸ and offers as an example

the case which so often arises between master and servant, and in so many varieties of form: a case which requires you to decide between some violation of your conscience, on the one hand, as to veracity, by saying something that is not strictly true, as well as by evading (and that is often done) all answer to inquiries which you are unable to meet satisfactorily - a violation of your conscience to this extent, and in this way; or, on the other hand, a still more painful violation of your conscience in consigning deliberately some young woman - faulty, no doubt, and erring, but yet likely to derive a lesson from her own errors and the risk to which they have exposed her - consigning her, I say, to ruin, by refusing her a character, and thus shutting the door upon all the paths by which she might retrace her steps. This I state as one amongst the many cases of conscience

daily occurring in the common business world. It would surprise any reader to find how many they are; in fact, a very large volume might be easily collected of such cases as are of ordinary occurrence. *Casuistry!* the very word *casuistry* expresses the science which deals with such *cases*.⁷⁹

De Quincey's mind played endlessly over problems such as these, fascinated by the moral complexity of the situation and the effort of logic needed to determine a justifiable course of action. And indeed, his own writings on casuistry would fill, not 'a very large volume', but certainly a small one. He defines the term on at least four separate occasions, prompting Masson to remark that 'this paragraph repeats an idea which occurs in several parts of De Quincey's writings.'⁸⁰ De Quincey weighs up the morality of, among others things, war, revenge, Britain's 'Eastern policy', his own bolt from Oxford, his failure to write a promised third instalment of the *Confessions* and his arraignment of Coleridge on charges of plagiarism.⁸¹ In an essay devoted entirely to 'Casuistry' he considers such topics as "*Suicide*", "*Veracity*", "*The Case of Charles I*", "*The Pagan Decision*" and 'those duties which a man owes to himself; and, foremost amongst them, the duty of cultivating his own health.'⁸² There are other full-length essays on the 'Casuistry of Roman Meals' and the casuistry of duelling. At one point De Quincey goes so far as to speak of the 'romance of casuistry', taxing himself for cowardice in a situation that never occurred.⁸³

To all these cases must be added De Quincey's principal area of casuistical investigation, - opium-eating. De Quincey discusses 'how it was, and through what series of steps, that [he] became an opium-eater.' He assesses the different ways in which 'opium gives and takes away' and admits at one point that his 'self-indulgence' in the drug is 'open to doubts of casuistry, according as that name shall be

extended to acts aiming at the bare relief of pain, or shall be restricted to such as aim at the excitement of positive pleasure.'⁸⁴ De Quincey defends himself against Coleridge's 'most unfriendly blows at my supposed voluptuousness in the use of opium.' 'Coleridge is wrong to the whole extent of what was possible', De Quincey argues;

wrong in his fact, wrong in his doctrine; in his little fact, and his big doctrine. I did not do the thing which he charges upon me; and, if I *had* done it, this would not convict me as a citizen of Sybaris or Daphne. There never was a distinction more groundless and visionary than that which it pleased him to draw between my motives and his own....Most truly I have told the reader that not any search after pleasure, but mere extremity of pain from rheumatic toothache - this and nothing else it was that first drove me into the use of opium.⁸⁵

De Quincey carries on in this mode for eight pages. Wordsworth impatiently dismissed such argumentation as '*fencing and proving*'.⁸⁶ But where Wordsworth sometimes saw only blacks and whites, De Quincey perceived in almost every circumstance intermingling shades of grey. Under the banner of casuistry, he draws fine distinctions and points emphatically to subtle inaccuracies in an attempt to communicate the moral intricacies he sees implicit in innumerable '*cases* arising in human life.' 'The casuists have become a byword of reproach', George Eliot writes at the close of *The Mill and the Floss*;

but their perverted spirit of minute discrimination was the shadow of a truth to which eyes and hearts are too often fatally sealed - the truth, that moral judgments must remain false and hollow, unless they are checked and enlightened by a perpetual reference to the special circumstances that mark the individual lot.

For Eliot, as for De Quincey, casuistry reveals the important truth that 'we have no master-key that will fit all cases.'⁸⁷

De Quincey's logical bent delighted in trying to solve a crime. 'One great class of criminals I am aware of in past times as having specially tormented myself', he writes in the *Posthumous Works*, ' - the class who have left secrets, riddles, behind them.' James Hogg remembers De Quincey's ability to piece together the solution to a murder 'long before the messengers of justice had tracked out the missing links in the chain of evidence.' De Quincey follows in detail the murder trial of Madeline Smith.⁸⁸ He is even more intrigued by the trial of Palmer. 'I (like most people) am more perplexed as the case unfolds its unintelligibilities', he informs his daughter Emily. But then a subtle equivocation in Palmer's testimony gives De Quincey's mind room for the kind of ratiocinative speculation that it delights in. 'Never for one moment have I doubted Palmer's guilt', he continues to Emily.

And until he, manifestly desiring to benefit by a quibble, said, "Cooke did not die" (or "was not poisoned") "by strychnia", I (like all others) held as a matter of certainty that the murderer and the mode of murder were equally manifest. Since Saturday last, however (when in the second and third editions of the *Scotsman* and the *Express* I read telegraphic accounts of the execution), I have been shaken in that opinion. For manifestly Palmer...wished...to equivocate and play the Jesuit with his own conscience. He fancied it possible to benefit in a ghostly world by adherence to the *literal* truth, whilst in the present world he benefitted by what was *virtually* a falsehood, conveying a false impression, but verbally might be true. "I did not kill (or did not poison) Cooke by strychnia." But did you by any other poison?" To that question he refused any answer....After this I felt myself compelled to hesitate about the strychnia.⁸⁹

De Quincey's almost prurient fascination with murder finds vivid expression in this empathy with someone 'playing the Jesuit.'

Indeed, while Poe is generally regarded as 'the father of detective fiction', De Quincey might be seen as a one of the grandparents of this genre, along with such other figures as Eugène François Vidocq and his *Memoirs* and James Fenimore Cooper's 'Hawkeye' from the *Leatherstocking Tales*.⁹⁰ De Quincey plants his love of analyzing a murder at the heart of fictions like *Klosterheim*, 'The Avenger' and the "Postscript" to 'On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts', though as A.S. Plumtree points out, there is a central difference in emphasis between the crime fictions of De Quincey and Poe: 'Whereas Poe is primarily interested in the detective Dupin', Plumtree writes, 'De Quincey is more directly concerned with the drama of guilt and revenge in the murderer and the terror of his victims. The crime itself, not the outcome, which is known in advance, creates suspense.'⁹¹ De Quincey constructs his accounts by putting himself inside the murderer and the victims; Poe produces his tales by putting himself in the shoes of the detective.

There is, however, a striking similarity between the persona of Dupin and the persona of De Quincey. By way of introduction to both Dupin and 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', Poe speculates on 'the mental features discoursed of as the analytical.' 'As the strong man exults in his physical ability, delighting in such exercises as call his muscles into action', Poe reflects,

so glories the analyst in the moral activity which *disentangles*. He derives pleasure from even the most trivial occupations bringing his talent into play. He is fond of enigmas, of conundrums, or hieroglyphics; exhibiting in his solutions of each a degree of *acumen* which appears to the ordinary apprehension

preternatural. His results, brought about by the very soul and essence of method, have, in truth, the whole air of intuition.⁹²

As we have seen, De Quincey himself, like Dupin, not only 'derives pleasure from even the most trivial occupations bringing his [analytical] talents into play' but he has a fondness for 'enigmas' and 'conundrums.' Also, as we discover later of Dupin, he, like De Quincey, has an especial love for reading newspaper accounts of murders in an effort to piece together the solution.⁹³

More to the point, the 'neglected genius' personas manufactured throughout the respective writings of Poe and De Quincey find their most powerful manifestation in Dupin and the 'philosopher' of *Confessions*, a work which Poe both knew and praised.⁹⁴ De Quincey's ideal philosopher combines 'a superb intellect in its *analytic* functions' with 'the *moral* faculties, as shall give him an inner eye and power of intuition' in the same way that Poe's detective uses 'the very soul and essence of method' to produce results that 'have, in truth, the whole air of intuition.' By uniting the logical with the intuitive the philosopher and the detective grapple with what both appear to regard as the highest of intellectual functions, 'the moral activity which *disentangles*,' whether it be in an effort to penetrate the mysteries of human nature, the mysteries of crime or both. Indeed, in the sequel to 'Rue Morgue', 'The Mystery of Marie Roget', Dupin refers on a number of occasions to matters he describes as 'philosophical', whether it be the 'excessively unphilosophical' reasonings of one of the newspapers or how 'a true philosophy will always show, that a vast, perhaps the larger portion of truth, arises from the seemingly irrelevant.' 'Marie Roget' concludes with an examination of the laws of coincidence, which 'the merely general reader' misunderstands but which 'with the

philosophical...needs no exposure.' In Dupin's final mystery, 'The Purloined Letter', he out-foxes an intellect much like his own, for his foe, like De Quincey's philosopher, is 'both...poet *and* mathematician.'⁹⁵ De Quincey's crime fiction differs fundamentally from Poe's in its concern with inner rather than outer. But in the letters of his later years De Quincey appears as a kind of English doppelganger of Dupin, an intellectual surrounded by books living a life of poverty and solitude, pouring over newspaper accounts of murder and exercising the prodigious powers of his mind in an effort to solve them. Even more significantly, the interest many of De Quincey's tales evince in the scenes and details of murder together with the philosophical persona he creates in *Confessions* are distinct fictional harbingers of Dupin.

As a literary critic, De Quincey sometimes mocks the efforts of the analytical mind. For instances, he reprimands Maria Edgeworth for failing to understand Milton's line, "And in the lowest deep a lower deep still opens to devour me." According to De Quincey, Edgeworth complained that "if it was already the lowest deep, how the deuce...could it open into a lower deep?" Yes', asks De Quincey, 'how could it?' He replies:

In carpentry it is clear to my mind that it could *not*. But, in cases of deep imaginative feeling, no phenomenon is more natural than precisely this never-ending growth of one colossal grandeur chasing and surmounting another, or of abysses that swallowed up abysses.⁹⁶

Similarly, in 'On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*' De Quincey stresses that the imagination is the greatest of all mental faculties: 'Here I pause for one moment', he writes at the beginning of the essay's second paragraph,

to exhort the reader never to pay any attention to his understanding when it stands in opposition to any other faculty of his mind. The mere understanding, however useful and indispensable, is the meanest faculty in the human mind and the most to be distrusted: and yet the great majority of people trust to nothing else; which may do for ordinary life, but not for philosophic purposes.⁹⁷

Some of De Quincey's finest literary criticism concentrates on arresting and explaining scenes of great imaginative significance. De Quincey elaborates, for example, on the power of the ghost scenes in *Hamlet* and the antagonistic tensions created when Milton uses 'words of art' like '*frieze, architrave, cornice, zenith*' and '*theatre*' to describe the 'primitive simplicities of Paradise.'⁹⁸ In his commentary on Wordsworth's 'There was a Boy' De Quincey highlights the import of the word 'far' in the lines,

Then sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents.⁹⁹

'This very expression, "far"', De Quincey avers, 'by which space and its infinities are attributed to the human heart, and to its capacities of re-echoing the sublimities of nature, has always struck me with a flash of sublime revelation.'¹⁰⁰ So too, after a feeling of 'great perplexity' lasting several years, De Quincey realizes that the reason he finds the knocking at the gate in *Macbeth* so profoundly affecting is because it 'reflect[s] back upon the murder' of King Duncan 'a peculiar awfulness and a depth of solemnity.' 'When the deed is done - when the work of darkness is perfect', De Quincey whispers,

then the world of darkness passes away like a
pageantry in the clouds: the knocking at the gate is

heard; and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced: the human has made its reflux upon the fiendish: the pulses of life are beginning to beat again: and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live, first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended [the murderers].¹⁰¹

But though he praises and describes the workings of the imaginative mind, the bulk of De Quincey's literary criticism is the product of the analytical faculty. Indeed, as we have just seen, though in 'On the Knocking at the Gate' he pauses to ridicule the understanding as 'the meanest faculty in the human mind', Jordan rightly characterises this essay as 'a triumph of rational analysis. If for an instant [De Quincey] suspends his logical approach', Jordan notes,

it is not for abandoned impressionism. The practical understanding...is held in abeyance and critical approbation justified by the intuitive reason...until such time as he can, as he does in *Macbeth*, "solve the problem." The solution may be sparked by an intuitive flash, but it is expanded by the understanding; the intellectual faculty may be temporarily baffled, but only by its application is the problem solved: and De Quincey thinks the business of criticism is to solve problems.¹⁰²

In a discussion entitled 'The Critic as Logician' Jordan then goes on to show how De Quincey comments logically and perceptively on such things as Milton's spelling, the 'correctness' of Pope's verse and Shakespeare's popularity in the seventeenth century. Jordan highlights, too, De Quincey's sensible remarks on the circumstances that precipitated Keats's death: '[Keats] was not the victim of any systematic malignity, as has been represented', De Quincey asserts. 'He died, I believe, of pulmonary consumption, and would have died of it, probably, under any circumstances of prosperity as a poet.'¹⁰³ Whether

De Quincey uses his logical faculty in cooperation with his imaginative intuition or whether his logical faculty acts independently and with a marked degree of what Jordan calls 'cold, common sense'¹⁰⁴, the end result is that most of his literary criticism is presided over by his preoccupation with analysis and problem-solving.

Indeed, on occasion De Quincey as critic allows his love of analysis to become so headstrong that it results in a *'matter-of-fact-ness'*, a clinging to the palpable, or often to the petty¹⁰⁵ that distracts him into irrelevant refinements. He cites Wordsworth's tenet that 'the child is father of the man' only to discourse on the fact that while 'all that is now broadly emblazoned in the man, once was latent - seen or not seen - as a vernal bud in the child' this is 'not...true inversely - that all which pre-exists in the child finds its development in man.' De Quincey also believes that if Wordsworth's poem 'We Are Seven' is to be credible 'the little Carnarvonshire child' who tells Wordsworth she is 'eight years old' and repels 'the idea of death under an absolute inability to receive it' must, in fact, have been younger. 'Naturally', De Quincey states,

we must not exact from Wordsworth any pedantic rigour of accuracy in such a case: but assuredly we have a right to presume that his principle, if tenable at all, must apply to all children below the age of *five*. However, I will say *four*.¹⁰⁶

De Quincey is analytical in the extreme when he undertakes a critique of Wordsworth's story of the ruined cottage. For De Quincey, the story 'is in a wrong key, and rests upon a false basis.' De Quincey considers Robert's 'desertion' of Margaret 'the worst form of cowardice'. He thinks, too, that the problem of this desertion could have been solved with very little bother: instead 'of suffering poor Margaret to loiter at

the gate', he writes, her friend 'the Wanderer should at once have...written to the War-Office; and in a very few days an official answer, bearing the indorsement *On H.M.'s Service*, would have placed Margaret in communication with her truant!' De Quincey also wants to know if

it might be allowable to ask the philosophic wanderer who washes the case of Margaret with so many coats of metaphysical varnish, but ends with finding all unavailing, "Pray, amongst your other experiments, did you ever try the effect of a guinea?"¹⁰⁷

Such comments owe something to De Quincey's desire to amuse or shock his magazine readership. They are, moreover, valid only if one chooses to ignore, as De Quincey does, Margaret's representative function. She stands for a mass of human misery beyond the power of a whole team of wanderers to relieve. The De Quincey who wrote about Ann of Oxford Street understood this perfectly well. His comments on Wordsworth's poem are deliberate sophistry.

Unsurprisingly, De Quincey's preoccupation with logic throughout his literary criticism was not of a kind to enable him to surmount his Christian and Tory prejudices. Indeed, De Quincey uses 'logic' to reinforced his prejudices rather than to promote new insight or understanding. His unyielding Church of England stance compels him to denigrate most of Greek literature, except the writings of Herodotus and Demosthenes and the 'infinite treasure of Greek tragic drama.'¹⁰⁸ De Quincey declares that Homer has not 'the slightest pretensions' to sublimity and that Socrates is a 'cunning and libidinous old fellow.' Elsewhere he asserts that Isocrates 'is a mere scholastic rhetorician' and that Pindar's subjects are 'mean and extinct' while his 'lyric metres...without one exception, are...merely chaotic labyrinths of

sound.¹⁰⁹ De Quincey claims that the Greeks were not just spiritually 'starved and palsied' but that poetically they are 'uninventive and sterile beyond the example of other nations.'¹¹⁰

Such derisive comments owe a great deal to De Quincey's Christian prejudices but, like his remarks on Wordsworth's story of Robert and Margaret, they also owe something to his desire to shock and denounce. Throughout De Quincey's entire writing career, the reputation of the Greeks was extremely high. Richard Jenkyns, in his *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, has shown the reverence for and influence of the ancients on many writers from the nineteenth century, including Shelley, Byron, Thomas Arnold, George Eliot, Walter Pater and Thomas Hardy.¹¹¹ 'I have no doubt that thousands of people never heard of have had hearts comp[le]tely disinterested', Keats writes in a letter of 1819: 'I can remember but two - Socrates and Jesus - their Histories evince it.' In 1834, J.S. Mill states that 'Plato has deserved the title of a great moral writer. Christ did not argue about virtue, but commanded it: Plato, when he argues about it, argues for the most part inconclusively; but he resembles Christ in the love which he inspires for it.' Nearly two decades later Matthew Arnold tells Arthur Clough that 'Homer *animates*- Shakespeare *animates*..the Gipsy Scholar at best awakens a pleasing melancholy.' Men 'want something to *animate* and *ennoble* them - not merely to add zest to their melancholy or grace to their dreams.' Jenkyns notes that

when Cobden tentatively suggested in 1850 that there might be more useful information in one issue of *The Times* than in the whole of Thucydides, the remark was greeted with a storm of derision and hung round his neck like an albatross for the rest of his career.¹¹²

De Quincey's revulsion against all that is 'pre-Christian' led him to deride the Greeks and their achievements, but he would have been well aware of contemporaries' attitudes on the subject and he was cagey enough to realize that this revulsion could be turned into saleable magazine copy by occasionally inflating it to the point where it flagrantly and deliberately debunked the current intellectual trend. *Confessions* had taught De Quincey the value of notoriety: 'a storm of derision' sold magazines.

De Quincey took a less provocative stand on most Latin writers, perhaps because their reputation was not as high as that of Greek writers during these years and so he did not feel as compelled to vilify their accomplishments. Ovid's tales were 'never equalled on this earth for the gaiety of their movement and the capricious graces of their narrative.' He accepted that Cicero was 'the mighty master of language for the Pagan world' but in a calculated affront to the received opinion of his shining excellence as a moralist dismissed him as 'wicked.'¹¹³ De Quincey refers to himself as 'a great reader of Livy', whom he says he prefers 'both for style and matter, to any other of the Roman historians.' Virgil is 'so limited as to bulk, and much more limited as regards compass of thought and variety of situation or character.' But prose writers like 'the two Plinys, the two Senecas, Tacitus, Quintilian' are the equal of Cicero in 'written composition', though not in oratory. Juvenal's indignation was 'sometimes mean in its quality, false in its direction, extravagant in its expression: but it was tremendous in the roll of its thunders.'¹¹⁴

De Quincey had a relatively high opinion of German literature, though his John Bullism and his desire to shock can still lead him to make fatuous remarks like 'no German has any conception of style' or 'to found a meek and docile nation, the German is the architect wanted.'

De Quincey, too, refers to Klopstock as 'an abortion' and he takes one paragraph to reject Goethe's *Faust* as impenetrable.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, he is the first to translate Lessing's *Laocoon* into English and the first to present English audiences with a critical assessment of Herder. Moreover, in an article of 1821 De Quincey writes a penetrating analysis of the genius of Richter, undoubtedly aided by the fact that Richter's genius so resembled his own. 'John Paul's intellect', De Quincey avers,

- his faculty of catching at a glance all the relations of objects, both the grand, the lovely, the ludicrous, and the fantastic - is painfully and almost morbidly active: there is no respite, no response allowed....From his mode of presenting things, his lyrical style of connexion, and the prodigious fund of knowledge on which he draws for his illustrations and his images...his obscurity arises.¹¹⁶

Rosemary Ashton states that De Quincey's efforts of 1821 constitute 'the first important critical article in England' on Richter.¹¹⁷

De Quincey had a much lower opinion of French literature. He almost invariably spoke of the French as vain and flippant: he praised their sprightliness but felt it too often smacked of levity; he admired their enthusiasm but believed it lacked structure and principle. De Quincey once claimed French literature was 'now in the last stage of phthisis, dotage, palsy, or whatever image will best express the most abject state of senile - (senile? no! of anile) - imbecility.'¹¹⁸ De Quincey does not even attempt to substantiate such a statement nor does he ever remark at length on any French author. Rather, he assumes the blinkered self-righteousness of the bigot and sneers and scoffs at will, though the derisive nature of his comments again owes something to his eagerness to jolt or entertain his audience. When assessing the

knocking at the gate, the 'correctness' of Pope or the intellect of Richter, De Quincey's analytical faculty produces revealing insights. But frequently its actions are undermined by too great an insistence on 'logic', aggressive critical remarks born out of prejudice and an incessant desire to stun or amuse.

As a populariser, De Quincey relies often on his analytical abilities. He is a good storyteller, for instance, because he knows how to arrange details and circumstances so as to achieve their optimum effect. And he knows when a story has been ruined because the details have been handled poorly. De Quincey's sensitivity to the 'logic' of a story is best illustrated by an anecdote in which ^{he} relates to Francis Jacox how John Wilson used to spoil 'a story in the telling' because he did not pay enough attention to way in which its details were best arranged. "'When I had lodgings over Waterloo Bridge, near the Surrey Theatre, in 1814"', De Quincey recounts,

"every night toward twelve o'clock a terrific din was caused in and around the playhouse by the explosion scene in a piece that involved the burning of the Kremlin; regularly, to a minute, that explosion awoke a contiguous cock; this cock, in full crow, awoke another; the second cock a third, and the definite three an indefinite chorus, or antiphony, of others; which chorus, again, awoke and provoked a corresponding series of dogs; and so on with other clamorous voices in succession - gradually swelling the aggregate of tumultuous forces. Now, when Professor Wilson, who found my story of the midnight din amusing, retold it in his own vigorous but inaccurate fashion, he spoilt the effect by making the uproar synchronous, instead of gradually successive."¹¹⁹

The fastidious precision of this narrative is highly characteristic, and

De Quincey the critic is correspondingly irritated when good material is handled poorly.

De Quincey's abilities as a storyteller are evident in a number of works that he popularizes through translation, though on occasion his attitude toward the role of the translator is somewhat contradictory. In some cases De Quincey rejects any intervention by the 'storyteller' whatsoever because he feels that it is the translator's duty to adhere closely to the source. De Quincey asserts, for example, that 'a great authentic classic of the Antique' like 'the "Prometheus Desmotes" of Aeschylus' should be translated as accurately as possible: 'our object is not the best possible drama that could be produced on the fable of "Prometheus"', De Quincey writes; 'what we want is the very "Prometheus" that was written by AEschylus, the very drama that was represented at Athens.'¹²⁰ Similarly, De Quincey asserts that he binds himself 'to a faithful translation in all cases' where Richter is his source.¹²¹ Frederick Burwick speaks of De Quincey's translations from *Hesperus* as retaining 'the import and pathos of the German' and creating 'English cadences as rhythmic as the original.'¹²² Not all De Quincey's translations of Richter are faithful¹²³ but in the main he popularised Richter by reproducing Richter.

In most of his other works as a translator, however, De Quincey popularised a foreign source by modifying, developing and refining it: his storytelling abilities were usually given full sway. In an 1826 *Blackwood's* article on 'Gillies's *German Stories*' De Quincey declares his belief that the translator may legitimately 'betray' the original in an attempt to 'improve' the plot or 'inspirit' the characters. 'For Heaven's sake', he writes, 'let every translator emancipate himself so far from thralldom to the book before him, and put forth so much activity of mind, as to think in English, and not passively to reproduce

the phraseology of his German original.¹²⁴ De Quincey's translation of Hartmann's 'Toilette of the Hebrew Lady' is described by Essig as 'a model of skilful abridgement and graceful translation.' Musgrove writes that De Quincey's changes to Holberg's *Niels Klim* are 'usually...to abbreviate the rather wordy and leisurely progress of the original, and get on with the story.' De Quincey's translation of Baggesen's *Labyrinth* is described by Tave as 'very free, and...livelier than the original.' Goldman illustrates how De Quincey radically restructures Arndt's 'Russia in the Summer and Winter of 1812', Wasianski's 'The Last Days of Immanuel Kant' and Bergmann's 'Revolt of the Tartars.'¹²⁵ De Quincey himself details how he altered the style, structure and sentiment of Alexis's novel *Walladmor*: 'In general I have proceeded as one would in transplanting a foreign opera to our stage', he explains: 'where the author tells the story ill - take it out of his hands and tell it better: retouch his recitative; bring out and develop his situations: in this place throw in a tender air, in that a passionate chorus.'¹²⁶ At the same time, De Quincey is at pains to stress that his translation has reduced the 'three corpulent...volumes' of the German original 'into two English' volumes 'of rather consumptive appearance' by hewing away a good deal of extraneous matter. 'I was convinced', he states, 'that upon our rather stormy English seas [*Walladmor*] would flounder, unless I flung overboard part of her heavy ballast, and cut away some of her middle timbers....I did so; and she righted in a moment.'¹²⁷ When De Quincey was short of ideas or reference material he chided, blathered and deceived. But as Goldman points out, 'in works of abridgement....he is invariably direct, concise and solid.'¹²⁸ In several pieces of translation De Quincey uses his extensive knowledge of language and his analytical faculty to brighten the style and tighten the logic

of his source. In so doing, he became an effective populariser of a series of foreign writings.

The ability to elevate style and restructure logic also makes De Quincey an effective populariser of English ideas. De Quincey prided himself on his ability to render ideas 'more luminously.'¹²⁹ He gives definitive expression to two of Wordsworth's finest literary concepts - 'style as the incarnation of thought' and 'the literature of power.' De Quincey asserts that the idea of 'style as incarnation' was communicated to him by Wordsworth.¹³⁰ And in fact, the idea can be found in both Coleridge and Wordsworth. But their written references to the concept are brief¹³¹: nowhere does either writer set himself the task of explaining plainly and precisely what the idea *means*. Possibly neither ever found occasion or reason to, but at the same time it is not a task for which the genius of either was particularly well suited. One remembers Byron in *Don Juan* asking Coleridge to 'explain his Explanation.' De Quincey himself said that Coleridge had 'too little talent for teaching or communicating any sort of knowledge' while he declared that Wordsworth had 'not...any popular talent of writing for the current press.'¹³² If Coleridge and Wordsworth gave him the idea of 'style as incarnation', he gave the idea its definitive expression. 'The truth', De Quincey writes,

is apparent on consideration: for, if language were merely a dress, then you could separate the two; you could lay the thoughts on the left hand, the language on the right. But, generally speaking, you can no more deal thus with poetic thoughts than you can with soul and body. The union is too subtle, the intertexture too ineffable, - each co-existing not merely *with* the other, but each *in* and *through* the other....In short, the two elements are not united as a body with a separable dress, but as a mysterious incarnation. And thus, in what proportion the thoughts are subjective,

in that same proportion does the very essence become identical with the expression, and the style become confluent with the matter.¹³³

Coleridge and Wordsworth mention the concept of 'style as the incarnation' in their writings. But only in De Quincey's hands does this concept become vital and accessible.

This same pattern of derivation and popularization is evident in De Quincey's handling of 'the literature of power.' De Quincey credits Wordsworth with this idea, though it is an echo of the German distinction between the practical understanding (*Verstand*) and the intuitive reason (*Vernunft*). Coleridge, too, distinguishes between science and poetry. But according to De Quincey Wordsworth was the first to see the science/poetry distinction in terms of 'knowledge' and 'power', an assertion that no critic seems to gainsay.¹³⁴ But, curiously enough, at no point does Wordsworth discuss the idea at any length. In a footnote to the 1800 'Preface' he writes that 'much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose, instead of the more philosophical one of Poetry and Science.'¹³⁵ So too, in Book VIII of the 1805 *Prelude* Wordsworth uses the 'knowledge/power' dichotomy when he recollects the feelings that came upon him during his first visit London in 1788: 'teeming as it did Of past and present', he writes

such a place must needs
Have pleased me, in those times; I sought not then
Knowledge; but craved for power, and power I found
In all things.¹³⁶

With the exception of these two references, Wordsworth appears to have written nothing about the distinction between 'knowledge' and 'power.'¹³⁷

De Quincey, however, wrote often about this distinction.¹³⁸ He championed the literature of power because he believed the primary end of literature was to 'move', to 'affect', to 'impress.' The concept gives him a context within which to speak of some of his favourite works - *Paradise Lost*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear* - and it also takes account of his own 'impassioned prose.' De Quincey's definition of 'knowledge' and 'power' is lucid, detailed and luminous. Indeed, it represents one of the moments that he comes closest to being the 'philosopher' he describes in *Confessions*, for his definition of the concept combines the 'analytic functions' with 'the moral faculties': his logical functions define 'knowledge' and 'power', supply an analogy and draw a clear distinction between the two terms while at the same time his imaginative faculties enact the power they extol. Or, put another way, De Quincey's definition of knowledge and power is a combination of knowledge and power. 'What do you learn from *Paradise Lost*?', he asks.

Nothing at all. What do you learn from a cookery-book? Something new - something that you did not know before, in every paragraph. But would you therefore put the wretched cookery-book on a higher level of estimation than the divine poem? What you owe to Milton is not any knowledge, of which a million separate items are still but a million of advancing steps on the same earthly level; what you owe is *power*, - that is, exercise and expansion to your own latent capacity of sympathy with the infinite, where every pulse and each separate influx is a step upwards - a step ascending as upon a Jacob's ladder from earth to mysterious altitudes above the earth. All the steps of knowledge, from first to last, carry you further on the same plane, but could never raise you one foot above your ancient level of earth: whereas, the very *first* step in power is a flight - is an ascending movement into another element where earth is forgotten.¹³⁹

Clifford Leech points out that this definition does not recognise a 'literature of pleasure' that De Quincey himself seems often to associate with 'minor, specifically eighteenth-century, literary kinds.' Wellek complains of 'the vagueness and multiplicity of meaning which it is possible to assign to the term "power" and the fact that also "knowledge is power".' Other critics have shown that De Quincey defines the 'knowledge/power' concept more than once and that there are shifts in meaning between his various definitions.¹⁴⁰ But be this as it may, Wordsworth offers no definition of the concept, and for all its different shortcomings what De Quincey does offer is eloquent and useful. In the broadest sense, he renders in striking language the legitimate distinction between the literature of art and the literature of science. More specifically, though his notion of power is indistinct, his many references to this term are generally concerned with the way in which he believes the highest literature calls forth and arranges emotions that would otherwise lie latent in the human heart. For De Quincey, such activity has a profoundly moral basis because it enables one to glimpse genuine but previously unrealised truths. Wordsworth appears to have coined the terminology but De Quincey, with his characteristic expansiveness, flushes out the idea, delineates the constituent parts, plumbs their import.

De Quincey was also an effective populariser of political economy. He became interested in economics in 1811 and was before long an enthusiastic admirer of David Ricardo. In his economic writings - notably 'Dialogues of the Three Templars' and *The Logic of Political Economy* - De Quincey combines a meticulous analysis of terms and distinctions with an intense conviction that what he is saying is important. When reading De Quincey on Ricardian economics one factor becomes noticeable very early: while his highly idiosyncratic manner

remains unchanged, he is patient, precise and in earnest rather than, as is so often the case when he writes on other topics, digressive, facetious, verbose or unreliable. He has been able to consult many different books, he is well versed in the most relevant economic arguments and he has clearly pondered the subject in detail. De Quincey held that Ricardo possessed an 'original and powerful' mind but that 'he found no genial pleasure in *communicating*' or 'simplifying knowledge.'¹⁴¹ De Quincey found genial pleasure in both, and set himself the task of popularising Ricardo.

Throughout his writings on economy De Quincey is insistent that 'logic must be freed by logic' and that if 'the science' is ever to advance 'the distinctions which are elementary' to it must be firmly and uniformly established.¹⁴² At the same time, he writes a pliant prose that is methodical but lucid and ranges in tone from the colloquial to the impassioned, depending on the point to be made or the effect to be created. In a discussion 'On the Two Modes of Exchange Value, Affirmative and Negative', for example, De Quincey reports that 'Salmon' is an 'instructive case' and then proceeds to inform us that

there are many men who would prefer one pound of salmon to four of beef; and up to that level, if the stress should ever lie on a man's intrinsic esteem for salmon, it might ascend easily. But it could not ascend very much higher; because a limit is soon reached at which it would always be pulled up suddenly by some other commodity of the same class in still higher esteem. A majority of palates prefer turbot (i.e. true turbot, - not the rubbish which passes for such). And vicarious articles, possibly even superior substitutes, will generally avail to fix a limit on the *maximum* side, beyond which few articles will be pushed even by the severest strain upon their affirmative qualities.¹⁴³

In other sections, however, De Quincey creates an atmosphere of splendid enchantment to allure the reader into a consideration of abstruse theory.

We have all read of secret doors in great cities so exquisitely dissembled by art that in what seemed a barren surface of dead wall, where even the eye forewarned could trace no vestige of a separation or of a line, simply by a simultaneous pressure upon two remote points, suddenly and silently an opening was exposed which revealed a long perspective of retiring columns - architecture the most elaborate, where all had passed for one blank continuity of dead wall. Not less barren in promise, not less abrupt in its transition, this speculation at the very vestibule of political economy, at the point where most it had appeared to allow of no further advance or passage, suddenly opens and expands before an artifice of logic which almost impresses the feelings as a trick of legerdemain - not by anything unsound in its own nature, but by the sudden kind of pantomime change which it effects. The demand is that you shall subdivide exchange value into two separate modes.¹⁴⁴

In his writings on the doctrines of Ricardian economics, De Quincey's tone characteristically reaches from the eccentric to the exalted. Yet everywhere in these writings is apparent the industry of his logical mind. Examining the complexities of political economy is the one natural and wholly productive outlet for the analytical side of his intellect.

Many economists - with no literary axe to grind - have praised De Quincey's popularizations of Ricardo. J.R. McCulloch refers to the 'Templar's Dialogue' as 'unequalled, perhaps, for brevity, pungency and force. They not only bring the Ricardian theory of value into strong relief, but triumphantly repel, or rather annihilate, the objections

urged against it by Malthus....They may be said to have exhausted the subject.' J.S. Mill, in his 1845 review of *Logic* states that, particularly with regard to matters of distribution, 'De Quincey thoroughly understands his master [Ricardo], and is therefore able to supply new developments and illustrations of the master's doctrine.' Mill also quotes De Quincey five times in his own 1848 volume *Principles of Political Economy*.¹⁴⁵ Karl Marx, in his *Capital* of 1867, thought enough of De Quincey's work to cite a passage from *Logic* that lends support to his assertion that 'machinery' increases 'from the first the human material that forms the essential field of capitalist exploitation.' Later, in *David Ricardo: A Centenary Estimate*, J.H. Hollander lists De Quincey as one of the men whose 'intellectual tenacity...irrepressible enthusiasm and...propagandist activity' ensured that 'economic science...felt the Ricardian influence to the extent that it did.' In 1926 Gertrud Meyer writes that in *Logic* 'De Quincey endeavours to provide in the form of practical commentary an introduction into the abstractions of Ricardo. His own contribution consists in additional examples, improvements of logic, mathematical illustrations, and in the effort towards clarity and sharper expression of antitheses.' Recently, P.D. Groenewegen has gone so far as to declare that De Quincey 'greatly influenced J.S. Mill's treatment of value in the *Principles*' by explicitly correcting 'Ricardo's value theory in stressing the mutual determination of exchange value by "intrinsic utility" and "difficulty of attainment"'.¹⁴⁶ In his writings on economics De Quincey repeatedly improves the style and logical exposition of Ricardo's theories. Though it has gone largely unnoticed by literary critics, economists have long recognized him as one of the most important nineteenth century popularisers of Ricardian theory.

De Quincey's analytical faculty led him to insist on accuracy in the use of words. He had a broad knowledge of language and an incessant desire to talk about it. In his writings he comments on topics ranging from 'the letter A' to the 'three great races of language' spoken 'upon our planet' and from the Mexican word for 'kiss' to the 'polysyllabic' English words of 'Latin or Greek origin.'¹⁴⁷ He remarks frequently on an astonishing variety of other topics, including etymology, pronunciation, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, word corruption, word abuse, word meaning and the learning of languages. He refers as well to idioms, accents, anagrams, dialects, neologisms, compounds, barbarisms, provincialisms and much else. Moreover, like Coleridge and many other contemporaries, De Quincey stressed that 'low thinking only can allow of a lax use of language' and he called on a number of occasions for 'a greatly improved valuation of words.'¹⁴⁸ According to De Quincey, 'in Spenser, in Shakespeare, in the Bible of King James's reign, and in Milton, there are very few grammatical errors.' He also praises Coleridge and Wordsworth for being 'remarkably attentive to the scholarlike use of words, and to the history of their own language.' But De Quincey feels 'that most eminent English writers do not write their mother tongue without continual violations of propriety' and in several instances he attacks a number of different authors, including Pope, Dr. Johnson and Keats.¹⁴⁹ De Quincey also criticises 'professional authors' - and here he likely means his fellow writers of the periodical press - for their 'absolute carelessness in this respect.' 'Whether in the choice of words and idioms', he states, 'or in the construction of their sentences, it is not possible to conceive the principle of lazy indifference carried to a more revolting extremity.'¹⁵⁰ De Quincey combined a rich knowledge of language with an insistence that it be used accurately.

But his demand for precision, while often constructive and genuine on a critical level, has a steep downside with respect to his own writings. De Quincey laboured long and diligently when he composed, developing and polishing, searching for just the right word or turn of phrase. Yet in his desire to find, not the right expression, not *precisely* the right expression, but *exactly, precisely* the right expression, De Quincey frequently produces knots and muddle: though he had a profound faith in the power of the written word, his logical mind saw in language an endless occasion for misconstruction, imprecision and misunderstanding. 'There is not one page of prose that could be selected from the best writer in the English language', De Quincey believes, '...which, upon a sufficient interest arising, would not furnish matter, simply through its defects in precision, for a suit in Chancery.'¹⁵¹

It is yet another of the paradoxes in De Quincey that while he preens himself on his ability to communicate the thoughts of others, his extreme sensitivity to the vagaries of language makes him doubt whether it is possible to communicate at all. His analytical mind perceives both what to alter in order to make some ideas more easily understood, and how at the same time the fitful and imperfect nature of language makes any rendering of an idea easily misunderstood. As early as his days as editor of the *Westmorland Gazette* De Quincey wishes that somehow his essays might be 'saved from misconstruction.' In the last year of his life, when revising his article on 'Goethe', he frets that 'a word too much, a word too little, I should unavoidably leave a false impression.' In his essay on 'Protestantism' De Quincey declares:

People that have practised composition with a vigilant eye know...by thousands of cases, how infinite

is the disturbance caused in the logic of a thought by the mere position of a word...the station of a syllable shall cloud the judgment of a council. Nay, even an ambiguous emphasis falling to the right-hand word or the left-hand word shall confound a system.¹⁵²

Though De Quincey trumpeted his skills with language, he was haunted by an acute awareness of its flaws and capriciousness.

On occasion, De Quincey will argue that cavilling over logic, grammar and spelling is 'the life of newspaper politics.' In other instances his anxiety about language renders him unwilling to say anything at all: he fears 'that great Roman warning...that a word once uttered is irrevocable.'¹⁵³ But in the main De Quincey's desire to be vigilant about the written word gives way to ill-judged, full-blown, cast-iron tediousness. Sometimes this takes the form of prolonged quibbling with someone's else words in an ineffectual effort to try and overthrow their logic and vindicate a preestablished position of his own. But worse still is when De Quincey uses a spiralling series of digressions, footnotes, caveats and parenthetical remarks to quibble over his own words. To some extent, this quibbling affords him an opportunity to not only amuse and instruct his magazine readership but to try and fulfill his genuine desire to make himself clearly and fully understood. But De Quincey also uses quibbling as a means of padding out articles with side issues and out of the way knowledge, a process that is assisted by the highly associative nature of his intellect, and then further invigorated by his dependency on opium, a drug that, as Alethea Hayter stresses, 'immensely' stimulates 'the power of associating ideas.'¹⁵⁴ The result of these various encouragements to digress is that in De Quincey's writings one word can unleash an avalanche of circumlocution. For example, in the 1856 *Confessions* De Quincey describes how a letter addressed to '*A Monsieur Monsieur de*

Quincy' mistakenly makes its way into his hands, which immediately prompts him to comment on 'this iteration of the *Monsieur*, as a courteous French fashion', which then prompts a footnote on the fact that this is 'not at all a modern fashion', which cues a discussion on how the 'famous Countess of Derby (Charlotte de Tremouille) who presided in the defence of Lathom House (which, and not Knowsley, was then the capital domicile of the Stanleys), when addressing Prince Rupert, sometimes superscribes her envelopes '*A Monseigneur le Prince Rupert*, but sometimes '*A Monsieur Monsieur le Prince Rupert*, which then generates the further observation that this all occurred 'in 1644, the year of Marston Moor, and the penultimate year of the Parliamentary War', which returns us to the main narrative, which in turn is almost immediately interrupted by another footnote on 'the family of De Quincey, or Quncy, or Quincie', which then generates a long 'Appendix' outlining the 'migrations' of the De Quincey family, which in turn produces two further footnotes, one on the fact that the word 'squireen' is of 'Hibernian origin' and 'was unknown to us in England until Miss Edgeworth had extended the horizon of our social experience' and another on the fact that 'the omission of the *Dé* in De Quincey, 'as an addition looking better at a tournament than as an indorsement on a bill of exchange, began... full three hundred years ago.'¹⁵⁵ De Quincey would argue that details about 'French fashion', 'the Parliamentary War' and 'Maria Edgeworth' were his attempts to amuse and instruct his magazine audience while information such as the different spellings of his family name was necessary if the reader was to accurately comprehend why the post office mistakenly forwarded the letter to him.

Yet excrescences of this nature owe more to De Quincey's love of quibbling, recondite knowledge and tenuous associations than a wish on

his part to please or educate his readership. De Quincey likes his narrative to be meandering, amusing, full of 'parasitical thoughts, feelings, digressions' but oftentimes he simply goes too far and becomes sluggish and unwieldy. In hindsight, for example, he knew that he had spoiled his 1856 *Confessions* in revision: 'as a book of *amusement*, he wrote to his daughter Emily, 'it is undoubtedly improved; what I doubt is, whether also as a book to *impress*'¹⁵⁶ And De Quincey's doubts were justified. The 1856 *Confessions* does not '*impress*': the details and particulars introduced in the revision obscure much of the power of the text in its original form.

And when De Quincey leaves the narrative for the combative mode the results are even worse, for his tendency to circumlocution is just as evident and consequently his arguments are often swamped with gratuitous detail. Like Hazlitt, De Quincey is intellectually aggressive, but whereas Hazlitt frequently moves forward boldly and directly, De Quincey tends to buzz about angrily with exhortations and justifications. Hazlitt can declaim on the same point for page after page, while amongst gathering piles of verbiage De Quincey is inclined to stab and swipe with often unfounded assuredness; Hazlitt cultivates simplicity of expression whereas it is De Quincey's perverse belief that 'to evade misinterpretation and constant ambiguity, requires a redundancy of words.'¹⁵⁷ Thus it frequently happens that Hazlitt's meaning is plain and compelling while De Quincey's is buried beneath needless distinctions and endless equivocation. De Quincey could render an idea like 'the literature of power' with a matchless vitality. But he could also take an ordinary discussion or a valid argument and so overburden it with details that its meaning and impact were almost wholly obscured.

The analytical strand of De Quincey's genius is present even in impassioned works such as the *Confessions Trilogy*. On occasion it takes on a ruminative quality. De Quincey's definition of a 'palimpsest', for example, as 'a membrane or roll cleansed of its manuscript by reiterated successions' leads into a discourse on the human brain as 'a natural and mighty palimpsest.' In the same manner, his question 'what is to be thought of sudden death?' triggers a solemn meditation on the difference between 'Roman' and 'Christian' interpretations 'of the word *sudden*, *final*' and *habitual*' acts and 'the duty which for ever calls us to the stern valuation of words.'¹⁵⁸ In moments such as these De Quincey again comes close to being the 'philosopher' he describes in *Confessions*, his '*analytical* functions' and his '*moral* faculties' combining to produce clarity and depth of vision.

But in many other parts of the *Trilogy* the analytical strand is responsible for – to use Keats's phrase – an 'irritable reaching after fact and reason.'¹⁵⁹ As the literal-minded critic De Quincey discusses what 'is probably a mistake' in Virgil's *Aeneid*, the 'unsoundness of a passage' in Wordsworth's *The Excursion* and one of 'the oversights in the *Paradise Lost*' He comments on historical enigmas like 'the unicorn, the kraken, the sea-serpent' and 'the mermaid' and considers the motives behind 'several murders' by 'a man called Symonds.'¹⁶⁰ De Quincey employs many footnotes, digressions and asides to refer specifically to his use of language: 'palms' is 'an equivocal word', 'diphrelatic' is 'a word too elegant to be pedantic', 'the word *divinity*' is used 'by design' and the 'word *exorcise* means properly', not 'banishment to the shades' but 'citation *from* the shades.'¹⁶¹ De Quincey discourses on the word '*thinking*', complains of those who 'proceed on a logical error of using the word intoxication with too great latitude', considers the Greek word that 'comes nearest to our idea of

the *sublime*, notes one of the 'uses' of 'the word *dissipation*,' justifies his phrase 'the tropical sun' and remarks on the derivation of the word "'snobs", and its antithesis, "nobs":¹⁶² In the impassioned myth of 'Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow' he explains that the name 'Levana' comes 'from the Latin verb (as still it is the Italian verb) *levare*, to raise aloft'; that 'the word *edūco*, with the penultimate short, was derived (by a process often exemplified in the crystallization of languages) from the word *edūco*, with the penultimate long'; and that 'there are two senses in the word *generally* - the sense of Euclid where it means *universally*, (or in the whole extent of the *genus*), and a foolish sense of this word where it means *usually*.'¹⁶³ Further, De Quincey's definition of the term 'involute' is inserted right into the middle of his moving description of the brief moments he spends by the bedside of his dead sister Elizabeth. The climax of the "Dream-Fugue" is interrupted by a note which details 'the history of the Campo Santo at Pisa.' In the "Fanny Dream", when 'all at once we are arrived in Marlborough forest, amongst the lovely households of the roe-deer', a footnote prosaically informs us that 'roe-deer do not congregate in herds like the fallow or the red deer, but by separate families, parents, and children.' Similarly, in 'The Vision of Sudden Death', as the mail-coach thunders down the wrong side of the road and 'one flash of horrid intuition' reveals to De Quincey that, among other things, 'every creature that met us, would rely upon *us* for quartering' a footnote marking directs our eyes to the bottom of the page where we read that 'quartering' is a 'technical word; and, I presume, derived from the French *cartayer*, to evade a rut or obstacle.'¹⁶⁴ Some of these details and observations are interesting in themselves but in context they frequently inhibit the more imaginative aims of the *Trilogy*. Passing remarks that clarify meaning and contribute to his portrayal of himself

as an 'intellectual creature' are useful and even welcome: but footnotes and digressions that threaten to puncture the imaginative resonance of a scene seem much less desirable. For better or worse, however, De Quincey could write almost nothing without the analytical strand asserting itself. It runs through the fabric of even his most imaginative sceneries.

As a young man De Quincey dreamed of bringing about an intellectual revolution. But while he possessed a powerful and keenly analytical mind, he allowed opium, prejudice and circumstance to destroy his hopes. He wrote often on philosophy and philosophers but to little effect. As a detective, a literary critic and a populariser, however, his analytical bent served him better, though when it induced him to insist on precision in the use of language he frequently became over-zealous and muddled. The *Confessions Trilogy*, too, is marked by his preoccupation with logic and unstructured detail. The analytical element is the most distinctive feature of De Quincey's intellectual character.

Chapter IV

The Disciple: Torn Away So Suddenly From The Prop

And when - O Friend! my comforter and guide!
Strong in thyself, and powerful to give strength! -
Thy long sustained Song finally closed,
And thy deep voice had ceased - yet thou thyself
Wert still before my eyes, and round us both
That happy vision of beloved faces -
Scarce conscious, and yet conscious of its close
I sate, my being blended in one thought
(Thought was it? or aspiration? or resolve?)
Absorbed, yet hanging still upon the sound -
And when I rose, I found myself in prayer.

--Coleridge, 'To William Wordsworth', 1807¹

William Wordsworth is everywhere in the writings of Thomas De Quincey. He is the central impulse behind every known piece of prose that De Quincey writes between 1809 and 1818. And once De Quincey begins his career with the periodicals one finds references to Wordsworth - as one critic puts it - 'almost *passim*'.² At the same time, Wordsworth respected De Quincey as a writer and deferred to his literary judgment in a number of instances. There are, however, stark differences between the two, from their chosen literary medium to their opinion of the Gothic. But perhaps the most significant difference is the way in which they portray the fear and guilt of their childhood experience. In *The Prelude* Wordsworth casts his mind back over moments of early pain and discovers a source of future strength. In

Confessions and particularly in *Suspiria* De Quincey casts his mind back over moments of early pain and discovers a source of future pain. *The Prelude* is clearly the starting point for *Confessions* and *Suspiria* but whereas it is a tale of imaginative power, the other two are Iliads of woe. De Quincey once noted that John Clare's 'almost rapturous spirit of admiration' for Wordsworth had 'an unhappy effect of depressing his confidence in himself.' 'It is unfortunate, indeed', he adds, 'to gaze too closely upon models of colossal excellence.'³ De Quincey gazed on the 'colossal excellence' of Wordsworth for sixty years yet it is a tribute to the fibre of his own abilities that his 'confidence in himself' was never depressed. The intense light of Wordsworth's genius is apparent throughout De Quincey's writings but it is a light frequently refracted, transmuted and even rejected by the darkened prism of De Quincey's own genius.

Wordsworth's poetry and prose is the single most important influence on De Quincey during the long germination period that precedes his career with the magazines. De Quincey seems to have been about fourteen when the poetry of Wordsworth first became known to him. In the revised version of the *Confessions* he writes that 'in 1799 I had become acquainted with "We Are Seven" at Bath. In the winter of 1801-2 I had read the whole of "Ruth".'⁴ Earlier, in *Recollections*, he places his reading of 'the first edition...of the *Lyrical Ballads*' in 'about the year 1799' and describes it as 'the greatest event in the unfolding of my own mind.'⁵ At fourteen, too, and whilst a student at Spencer's Academy, De Quincey began submitting poetry to the school paper called *The Observer*. He wrote some lines in response to a challenge from a nearby school. Over half a century later, a school friend, Edward Grinfield, could still remember them:

Since Ames's skinny school has dared
To challenge Spencer's boys,
We thus to them bold answer give
To prove ourselves "no toys."

Full thirty hard boys we are,
As brave as e'er was known;
We will nor threats nor dangers mind
To make you change your tone!

John Jordan points out that 'these lines hardly deserve enshrinement in the memory for fifty or sixty years, but they have a homely energy.' He goes on to suggest that 'they may well be a boy's idea of the ballad simplicity of some of the *Lyrical Ballads*.⁶ Finally, whilst at Spencer's Academy De Quincey's conception of himself as a poet was undoubtedly strengthened when he won third prize for his translation of Horace's Ode I.22. The piece was published in the *Juvenile Library* for June, 1800.

In his 1803 *Diary* De Quincey asserts outright that he plans to become a poet: 'I have besides always intended of course that *poems* should form the corner-stones of my fame.'⁷ The *Diary* also contains a list of twelve poets that De Quincey evidently admires above all others. Not one of these names has an exclamation mark after it except Wordsworth's and his has three. De Quincey bursts forth in praise of 'The Brothers': 'There is no good pastoral in the world but Wordsworth's "*Brothers*", he states; 'and that enchant⁹ composition has more pathos (ah! *what* pathos!) than poetry in it.' Further, at this time De Quincey musters the courage to send a letter to Wordsworth, during the course of which he hints broadly at his own poetic pretensions. 'I dare not say that I too have some spark of that heavenly fire which blazes there', he writes, though he is quick to add that 'if I have, it has not yet kindled

and shone out in any exertion which only could entitle me to your notice.'⁸

Over the next few years Wordsworth continues to sink deeper and deeper into De Quincey's ideas regarding literature and his own future aspirations. In a letter of 1804 Wordsworth adjures the nineteen-year-old De Quincey to keep to the straight and narrow during his time at Oxford. 'I need not say to you that there is no true dignity but in virtue and temperance, and, let me add, chastity', Wordsworth writes;

and that the best safeguard of all these is the cultivation of pure pleasures, namely, those of the intellect and affections. I have much anxiety on this head, from a sincere concern in your welfare, and the melancholy retrospect which forces itself upon one of the number of men of genius who have fallen beneath the evils that beset them: I do not mean to preach; I speak in simplicity and tender apprehension as one lover of Nature and of Virtue speaking to another....love Nature and Books; seek these and you will be happy.⁹

In 1806, whilst in the Lake District and hoping to find the courage to visit Wordsworth at Dove Cottage, De Quincey compiles a series of twelve points under the heading 'Constituents of Happiness.' Many of these seem to hark back to Wordsworth's letter of 1804. According to De Quincey, to be happy one needs, among other things, 'a capacity of thinking - *i.e.*, of abstraction and reverie', 'the cultivation of an interest in all that concerns human life and human nature', 'a fixed, and not merely temporary, resident in some spot of eminent beauty', 'an interchange of solitude and interesting society', '*books*' and 'the consciousness of a supreme mastery over all unworthy passions (anger, contempt, and fear), and over all appetites; together with a highly

cherished benevolence; or, to generalise this canon, a sense of moral elevation and purity.'¹⁰ The young devotee was hoping to live his life according to Wordsworthian doctrine.

In the autumn of 1807 De Quincey meets Wordsworth face to face for the first time. During a brief visit he hears the poet's conversation 'superior by much, in its tone and subject, to any which I had ever heard before - one exception only being made in favour of Coleridge.' He also hears the poet recite his newest work, 'The White Doe of Rylstone.'¹¹ By late 1808 De Quincey has moved into Allan Bank with the Wordsworths and found himself - as he put it years later - in 'daily nay hourly intercourse with William Wordsworth, the sublimest intellect and the most majestic, even if far from the most active, since the days of Milton.'¹² What De Quincey gained from this 'hourly intercourse' is beyond measure. In his 'Letters to a Young Man' of 1823 he records part of his debt: 'for most of the sound criticism on poetry, or any subject connected with it that I have ever met with', he writes, 'I must acknowledge my obligations to many years' conversation with Mr. Wordsworth.'¹³ In *Recollections*, De Quincey describes an evening when he and Wordsworth walked up to Dunmail Raise in the hope of meeting the carrier from Keswick 'who brought the London newspapers.' In an attempt to get some augury of the vehicle's approach Wordsworth stretches 'himself at length on the high road' and strains to hear the sound of the wheels. He listens for some time and then, just as he is abandoning hope, his eye catches sight of a "'bright star that was glittering between the brow of Seat Sandal and mighty Helvellyn'." Wordsworth gazes at the star 'for a minute or so' and then, turning to De Quincey, he discourses on the 'psychological principle' revealed by this moment. "'I have remarked'", the poet avers,

"from my earliest days, that, if under any circumstances, the attention is energetically braced up to an act of steady observation, or of steady expectation, then, if this intense condition of vigilance should suddenly relax, at that moment any beautiful, any impressive visual object, or collection of objects, falling upon the eye, is carried to the heart with a power not known under other circumstances."¹⁴

De Quincey undoubtedly learned much about both poetry and the human heart during his many conversations with Wordsworth.

But poetry and the human heart were not the only things Wordsworth was talking about when De Quincey arrived at Allan Bank in 1808. For some weeks the poet 'had been all in a rage about the Convention of Portugal.'¹⁵ De Quincey at this time was largely uninterested in politics. In his *Diary* he rather surprisingly lists Charles James Fox as the '*moral*' character 'in *public* life' that he most admires and on a number of other occasions he is reading or thinking about Napoleon.¹⁶ But when on 18 May, 1803 - a date that falls right in the middle of the *Diary* - England's Declaration of War with France sends Liverpool into an enthusiastic round of enlistments and 'great meetings' De Quincey, writes Eaton, 'seems to have been oblivious of them.'¹⁷ And four years later he was still oblivious. 'I had no opinions at all upon politics, nor any interest in public affairs', he recalls of his attitude in 1807, 'further than that I had a keen sympathy with the national honour, glorified in the name of Englishman, and had been bred up in a frenzied horror of jacobinism.' De Quincey had been deeply shocked at this time by the hostility Wordsworth and Southey displayed when speaking of the 'the reigning family.'¹⁸

De Quincey never lost his deep regard for the monarchy and ultimately Wordsworth came to be of the same mind. But Wordsworth

was always interested in politics and now, in 1808, De Quincey became interested too. Sara Coleridge recalled how as a child she used to watch De Quincey, Southey, Wordsworth and Coleridge pace back and forth in Allan Bank and 'discuss the affairs of the nation, as if it all came home to their business and bosoms, as if it were their private concern!'¹⁹ Wordsworth's kindling of this political enthusiasm in De Quincey produced De Quincey's first two published pieces of English prose²⁰, a letter to *The Times* for 6 January, 1809, protesting at the poor response of the public to a subscription fund sent up to assist 'Spanish Patriots'²¹ and a long 'Postscript on Sir John Moore's Letters' for Wordsworth's *The Convention of Cintra* pamphlet. In addition, De Quincey oversaw the printing of this pamphlet and made several changes to the text that Wordsworth accepted.²² Though his role as supervisor of *Cintra* was hardly a successful one, De Quincey's literary relationship with Wordsworth was often one of reciprocity. Over the next several years Wordsworth drew frequently on De Quincey's intellect and opinions.

A third piece of prose of 1809, the 'Letter of "Mathetes"', may also owe something to De Quincey. The 'Letter' appeared in *The Friend* for 14 December, 1809 and was written by John Wilson and Alexander Blair. But Blair later recalled that when he and Wilson wrote the 'Letter' 'De Quincey was with us' and he adds that De Quincey 'may have given some suggestions besides, but we certainly owed to him our signature.'²³ De Quincey would undoubtedly have agreed with the gist of the 'Letter.' In March, 1804, for example, he wrote to Wordsworth,

I looked around for some guide who might assist to develop & tutor my new feelings, & then it was that from a recollection of the deep impression made on me by that short poem I have mentioned ['We Are

Seven'] I knew where to seek that guidance, & where I sought, I found it.²⁴

Toward its conclusion the 'Letter' reads:

Of one such Teacher who has been given to our own age...in his annunciation of truths he seemed to speak in thunders. I believe that mighty voice has not been poured out in vain: that there are hearts that have received into their inmost depths all its varying tones: and that even now, there are many to whom the name of Wordsworth calls up the recollections of their weakness, and the consciousness of their strength.²⁵

De Quincey's heart had certainly 'received into [its] inmost depths all [the] varying tones' of Wordsworth's 'mighty voice.' Both Wilson and Blair were early admirers of Wordsworth and, what is more, the 'Letter' is written in the kind of meandering, mellifluous prose that Wilson favoured. But given De Quincey's presence at the time the 'Letter' was composed, his master/pupil relationship with Wordsworth both before and after this time and his own predilection for mellifluous prose, it seems possible that De Quincey not only made 'some suggestions' for the 'Letter' but that he contributed some sentences. In 1809, then, De Quincey took two - possibly some measure of three - tentative steps as an essayist. And his impetus, on each occasion, was Wordsworth.

Moreover, though by this time De Quincey had likely given up any idea of becoming a poet, it is possible that Wordsworth's prose - particularly in *Cintra* - was impressing upon him the potential of this form of literary expression. De Quincey knew something of this potential beforehand. As we have seen, in the summer of 1800 he had won third prize for his translation of Horace's Ode I.22 but earlier in the year he had also won seventh prize for his translation of a passage in Cicero.²⁶ In his *Diary* he is planning to write a number of essays

and already reading and praising Edmund Burke, a man he later refers to as the 'supreme writer of his century.'²⁷ Then, in 1809, *Cintra* makes a deep impression on him. 'The whole of this latter part', he writes Dorothy Wordsworth, ' - especially the part about the incompetence of ordinary Statesmen to deal with indefinite things - seems to me more beautiful than anything I ever read in prose.'²⁸ Possibly such praise owes something to his desire to mollify Wordsworth when he was fretting continually over his pamphlet. Yet *Cintra* is written in that continuous and occasionally impassioned style that recalls Cicero, that recalls Burke, and that De Quincey came to write with such effect. There is nothing particularly 'impassioned' about his 'Postscript' on Sir John Moore but De Quincey undoubtedly noted that *Cintra* not only shares themes with Wordsworth's poetry but that it contains a subtlety and a power that often brings it to the level of poetry. Perhaps *Cintra* encouraged De Quincey in his gravitation toward the other harmony of prose.

In 1811 or 1812 it seems possible De Quincey had produced yet another essay designed to help Wordsworth with his latest project. In the spring of 1810 Wordsworth had written an 'Introduction' for Joseph Wilkinson's *Select Views in Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire*. Soon Wordsworth was planning to expand this 'Introduction' into a separate *Guide* of his own, and between September, 1811 and November, 1812 he worked on two further sections.²⁹ At about this same time, De Quincey was formulating a remarkable theory: ' - viz. that the dialect spoken in Westmorland and Cumberland, in so far as it is peculiar to those counties, is borrowed wholly from the Danish.'³⁰ De Quincey wrote the details of this hypothesis down in an essay he entitled 'The Danish Origin of the Lake Country Dialect' and apparently offered it to Wordsworth. But then circumstances conspired against

the completion of the *Guide* altogether. De Quincey's essay was eventually published in the *Westmorland Gazette* in late 1819-early 1820. A year later Wordsworth had occasion to revive his *Guide* as an addition to his *River Duddon Sonnets*. In 1822, the *Guide* appeared as a separate publication for the first time. In 1823, De Quincey writes in the *London Magazine* that he is hopeful that 'Mr. Wordsworth may do me the favour to accept it ['The Danish Origin'] as an appendix to his work on the English Lakes.'³¹ Many years later De Quincey was rather less hopeful. 'Talking of Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*,' J.R. Findlay records of a conversation in 1855,

De Quincey said that on its original publication he offered Wordsworth an account of the origin and character of the language of the Lake district, which unlocked all its peculiar nomenclature; but "Wordsworth, who never liked to be obliged to anybody for anything, declined it in his usual haughty and discourteous manner, and it was ultimately published in a Kendal newspaper."³²

De Quincey's memory is not quite accurate here, for he could not have offered Wordsworth 'The Danish Origin' on the 'original publication' of the *Guide* because the first version appeared in 1810 and De Quincey states plainly in 'The Danish Origin' as published in the *Gazette* for 1819-1820 and in his *London* article of 1823 that he discovered the key to the Lake dialect in 1811.³³ Moreover, in the *Gazette* essay he speaks of a walk he took 'in the year 1812 or 1813.'³⁴ Nevertheless, it seems likely that when Wordsworth was working on the *Guide* in 1811-1812 De Quincey did offer him some version of 'The Danish Origin.' De Quincey would have undoubtedly known of the plan to produce the *Guide* and he was at this time still anxious to be useful to Wordsworth. Wordsworth's enthusiasm for the project was

considerable³⁵ and it probably spurred on De Quincey to produce an essay in the hope that it might be accepted as an appendix, just as Wordsworth's enthusiasm for the Cintra affair had awakened De Quincey's interest in politics and led to his 'Postscript' on Sir John Moore. But even if De Quincey did not begin to write 'The Danish Origin' until a few years after this date, by 1819-1820 it had been published in the *Gazette* and in 1823 he remained hopeful that it would be incorporated into the *Guide*. Wordsworth's preoccupation with a literary endeavour had again had the effect of stimulating De Quincey to productivity.

Sometime between 1808 and 1815 De Quincey read - or was read - *The Prelude*. Possibly he made notes on the poem at this time.³⁶ Excepting Coleridge, De Quincey is the only literary figure outside the Wordsworth family in the first half of the nineteenth century who knew this poem. *The Prelude* deepened his belief in Wordsworth as the major poet of the age, it encouraged his autobiographical bent and it gave a direction and structure to some of his central preoccupations. Though the effects of knowing *The Prelude* were not to become apparent for a few more years, this is the central episode in the genesis of De Quincey as a literary artist.

In May, 1809, Dorothy suggested to De Quincey that he write a defence of Wordsworth's poetry against the virulent attacks of Francis Jeffrey of the *Edinburgh Review*. De Quincey eagerly agreed but the project is not heard of again until, in early 1815, Wordsworth writes to Daniel Stuart, editor of the *Courier*, to ask if a place might be found 'in your Columns' for 'a short series of Letters' by 'Mr. De Quincey...upon the subject of the stupidities, the ignorance and the dishonesties of the *Edinburgh Review*.' Stuart, like Wordsworth, had become exasperated with De Quincey over his handling of the printing of *Cintra* but

Wordsworth now informs him, 'You need not doubt but that the Letters will be a credit to any Publication, for Mr. D.Q. is a *remarkably* able man.'³⁷ By March, 1815, Dorothy reports that the 'proof of [De Quincey's] letters to the *Courier* is actually in the hands of the Editor' but, characteristically, three years later De Quincey is writing to assure Wordsworth that he has 'been finishing that course of Letters on the value of the attacks made by the critics of the day upon your Poems.'³⁸ The 'Letters' for the *Courier* never appeared.

But this is not to say that they were not written or that De Quincey had not been busy on Wordsworth's behalf. According to Robinson, it was at De Quincey's request that Wordsworth 'omitted the personal attack on Jeffrey in his preface to his poems' of 1815.³⁹ Perhaps De Quincey wanted the task of attacking Jeffrey all to himself. De Quincey was also involved in correcting proofs for the 'Preface', and Wordsworth set great store by his opinion. 'I wish you had mentioned *why* you desired the *rough* Copies of the Preface to be kept', the poet writes fretfully in a letter of early February, 1815,

as your request has led me to apprehend that something therein might have appeared to you as better or more clearly expressed - than in the after draught; and I should have been glad to reinstate accordingly.⁴⁰

Further, as far as essays written at this time are concerned, John Wells has speculated that De Quincey's 1839 *Tait's* sketches of 'William Wordsworth' draw on material accumulated 'for the projected articles of 1815.' In particular, he lists a number of reasons why he thinks the second of these three sketches - the sketch dealing directly with *The Prelude* - might have 'utilised at least partly a draft of a section or sections of the series of 1815.' What is more, this second

sketch includes an attack by De Quincey on Jeffrey for his critique of "There was a Boy", an attack that Jordan states was 'undoubtedly' taken from the 'uncompleted project' of 1815. Elsewhere Jordan has marshalled a number of facts to show that 'it is entirely possible' that De Quincey's posthumously published essay on 'Wordsworth and Southey: Affinities and Differences' was written between 1815 and 1818 as 'the defence of Wordsworth against his critics which Dorothy asked him to write in 1809.'⁴¹ Interestingly, R.P. Gillies recalled that 'during the winter of 1815-1816' he saw in De Quincey's possession 'various literary compositions, written...on little scraps of paper, [that] must have reached to a great extent, but in his own estimation...were by no means "ready for the press".'⁴² Given the documentation of Wells and Jordan, it seems likely that a significant portion of these 'various literary compositions' were notes or 'Letters' on Wordsworth. In early 1815, then, Wordsworth was speaking of De Quincey as 'a *remarkably* able man' who was about to come to his defence against the *Edinburgh Review*. At this same time Wordsworth was also apparently leaving out an attack on Jeffrey from the 'Preface' at De Quincey's insistence and anxious to defer to De Quincey's opinion on the wording of a passage in that same 'Preface.' De Quincey, for his part, did not see the 'Letters' into print but, in addition to advice on the 'Preface', he almost certainly completed some part of the projected 'Letters' series. De Quincey had abilities and knowledge that Wordsworth was eager to tap: Wordsworth continued the mainspring of all De Quincey's known literary activities. The two were drawing ideas and direction from each other.

In the spring of 1818, an essay of De Quincey's in defence of Wordsworth *did* make it into print, though it was an essay of politics and not poetry. At the beginning of 1818 the reformer Henry Brougham

was named as the candidate who planned to contest one of the two Westmorland seats in the forthcoming general election. Both seats had long been in the possession of the local Tory land-owners, the Lowthers. Wordsworth threw himself into the Tory campaign with astonishing vigour and while De Quincey's own political sympathies were naturally engaged, there can be little question that his enthusiasm for the fray was strengthened by Wordsworth's own involvement. In the first three months of 1818 Wordsworth championed the Lowther cause with a series of letters published in the *Kendal Chronicle* and the *Carlisle Patriot*. In February, he reworked parts of some of the early letters into a pamphlet, *Two Addresses to the Freeholders of Westmorland*. In April De Quincey joined the Tory crusade with his *Close Comments Upon a Stragglng Speech*.⁴³ This essay not only directly counters a public address by Brougham at Kendal on 23 March but it cleverly defends Wordsworth's *Chronicle* and *Patriot* letters against charges brought by Brougham in that same address. De Quincey, however, seems to have had some help with the composition of *Close Comments*, for near the middle of April Wordsworth reminds Lord Lowther that 'the notes upon Brougham's Speech...from the pen of Mr De Quincey' contain 'a passage...interwoven by me....It related to facts.'⁴⁴ De Quincey and Wordsworth were apparently teaming up to denounce the jacobinical foe.

De Quincey's next two pieces of Tory propaganda were likely written at Wordsworth's request. On 28 March the abolitionist Thomas Clarkson published a letter in the *Kendal Chronicle* in which he announced his support for Brougham because the anti-slavery campaign needed his zeal in Parliament. Wordsworth, who had seen 'the original of the Letter', was already planning a response to Clarkson on 27 March but no response has been reliably attributed to him, likely because

Clarkson was a valued friend of the family and Wordsworth soon thought better of attacking him in print. Yet at the same time he would undoubtedly have felt that Clarkson's letter demanded a response from the Tory cause and, faced with this conflict of loyalties, he likely turned to De Quincey and asked him to refute Clarkson. De Quincey would have had a free hand because he did not know Clarkson personally. Also, Wordsworth had been impressed by *Close Comments* and would have been eager to draw again on De Quincey's skills as a political propagandist. The result of these machinations is De Quincey's short refutation of Clarkson in the *Carlisle Patriot* for 25 April under the cognomen 'One of the Old School'.⁴⁵ Further, De Quincey appears to have returned to the attack on Clarkson five weeks later in a long article, signed 'Philadelphus', in the second number of the newly founded *Westmorland Gazette*. Possibly this essay, too, was written at Wordsworth's instigation. Certainly, as Samuel Janzow has shown, De Quincey writes as one well aware of Wordsworth's dilemma. Janzow notes:

Particularly striking is the fact that Philadelphus' tone of respect toward Clarkson's anti-slave-trade achievement and toward the Wordsworth-Clarkson friendship, in its combination with the strong indignation over Clarkson's support of Brougham, turns out to be a close image of Wordsworth's own mixed feelings. De Quincey's previous long intimacy with Wordsworth, his sensitivity, his subtlety of mind, as well as his desire to be of personal service to the poet and so win his favour, are all surely mirrored in the carefully mingled attitudes and tones of the Philadelphus essay.⁴⁶

Throughout the run-up to the 1818 general election, then, even more than during the months of early 1815 when the *Courier* 'Letters' were planned and the 'Preface' was being revised, De Quincey was anxious to

be of service to Wordsworth and Wordsworth was anxious to tap De Quincey's abilities as a propagandist. Their literary relationship was, throughout the first half of this year, productive and remarkably interdependent, undoubtedly because they were always on safer ground when politics was the reason they were together.

Around the time that *Close Comments* was published De Quincey first approached Wordsworth about the editorship of the *Westmorland Gazette*. Wordsworth and several other Tories were planning to set up a hardline newspaper to combat what they considered to be the pernicious influence of the *Kendal Chronicle* and De Quincey was eager to obtain the editorship, and with it a much needed income. *Close Comments*, 'One of the Old School' and 'Philadelphus' are, in part, his attempt to prove that he is dependable and industrious to a Wordsworth that respected his abilities but remembered both the endless delays of *Cintra* and the *Courier* 'Letters' that never appeared. Wordsworth, of course, also knew De Quincey was heavily addicted to opium. In the event, the poet's voice did not prevail – or he did not choose it to prevail – on behalf of De Quincey's application and the job of editor went to a Londoner. Within six weeks, however, that editor had been sacked because, according to De Quincey, he had 'disgusted...in every way...the principal gentlemen of the country.'⁴⁷ Wordsworth then seems to have taken up De Quincey's cause with greater zeal and, by early July, the editorship of the *Gazette* was De Quincey's.

This does not mean, however, that Wordsworth left the task of running the paper to De Quincey. In fact, as Jordan has shown, Wordsworth's letters to Viscount Lowther at this time 'sound almost as if the poet thought of himself as virtual editor of the *Gazette*.'⁴⁸ Certainly Wordsworth sought constantly to impose his will on the way the paper was conducted, urging on De Quincey unsolicited advice,

reminding him of agreed upon policy and carping about the tone, length, prominence or obscurity of given articles. But despite this interventionism and his own managerial failings, De Quincey managed to steer the *Gazette* in the direction he wanted it to go. Under his editorship, the paper was spirited and informative, full of his various preoccupations and his Toryism, occasionally recondite or chaotic but always readable. De Quincey dealt with Wordsworth's meddling either by partially appeasing him, manoeuvring around him or ignoring him altogether. The periods of awe or reciprocity in their literary relationship passed, in these months, to barely concealed hostility.

It is clear, however, that Wordsworth remained impressed with De Quincey as a writer, for in the summer of 1819 he was hoping that either Southey or Lord Lonsdale could use their influence to procure for De Quincey the job of reviewing pamphlets on the bullion question for the *Quarterly Review*. Wordsworth wished what he considered 'the errors of the Bullionists' to 'be laid open' and he seems to have felt that if, in Southey's words, "De Quincey could bring his reasonings before the public through a favourable channel...he would go far towards exploding a mischievous error".⁴⁹ Neither Southey nor Lord Lonsdale was able to get De Quincey the job but Wordsworth's desire that they should try evinces his continuing regard for De Quincey's literary abilities.

De Quincey, on the other hand, had sought the editorship of the *Gazette* primarily to try and rescue his perilous financial position. However, he no doubt welcomed the initial renewal of close literary ties with Wordsworth. For many years, indeed, De Quincey seems to have drawn a unique kind of intellectual energy from the Wordsworths' presence, for it is a striking fact that all his known literary endeavours for nearly a decade, from the three essays of 1809 and his

work on *Cintra* through 'Danish Origin', the 1815 'Preface' and the *Courier* 'Letters' to the three political articles of spring, 1818 and several of his early essays for the *Gazette* stem directly from his association with Wordsworth. Wordsworth's letters, conversation, poetry and perhaps even his prose style also influenced De Quincey during these early years. Only after he became editor of the *Gazette* did De Quincey's own literary character begin to emerge. As his *Diary* and the early writings show, De Quincey had always held strong opinions of his own, many of which Wordsworth solicited or deferred to. De Quincey's reverence for Wordsworth was never carried to the point where he was prepared to deny the validity of his own thoughts. Moreover, the weekly demand for copy to fill the columns of the *Gazette* meant that De Quincey could no longer rely on Wordsworth for direction or inspiration, even had he wanted to: topics upon which he could write had to be found and he was now forced to exploit his own formidable reserve of facts and insights. The combination of his own intellectual strong-headedness, the need for written material and his resentment of Wordsworth's busybodying meant that during his seventeen months as editor of the *Gazette* De Quincey asserted his literary independence. Nevertheless, given Wordsworth's unparalleled influence throughout these early years, it is appropriate that it should be his letter in June, 1821, that enables De Quincey to introduce himself to Taylor and Hessey of the *London Magazine*: within weeks of this introduction *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* appears in the *London* and De Quincey is launched on his long career as a magazinist.

De Quincey, however, remains deeply indebted to the poetry and prose of Wordsworth. To be sure, in the years that follow *Confessions*, he not only loses personal contact with the poet and writes in a spiteful manner about their former relationship but he establishes a

unique literary identity as the 'Opium-Eater' and produces nearly two hundred magazine articles on a striking number of different topics and themes. Yet his youthful enthusiasm for the genius of the poet never leaves him and a thick Wordsworthian strand runs through almost everything he writes. Critics have commented at length on this fact. Ralph Wolfe compiles a list which illustrates that De Quincey in his writings quotes or refers to at least eighty-seven different Wordsworth poems, from titles we might expect - 'Tintern Abbey', 'Michael', 'Resolution and Independence', 'Intimations Ode', *The Excursion* - to titles rather less familiar - 'Malham Cove', 'Alas, What Boots the Long Laborious Quest', 'By Moscow Self-Devoted to a Blaze' and 'The Italian Itinerant, and the Swiss Goatherd.' D.D. Devlin discusses what he calls 'the common areas of both writers: Childhood, Time and Memory.' John Beer speculates that De Quincey's 'chief link with the poetry in *Lyrical Ballads*' is 'the note which runs through that volume...of a faith in the power of the human heart...to illuminate one's sense of humanity at large.' Helen Darbishire states that 'Wordsworth and Coleridge, first through the *Lyrical Ballads*, and afterwards through personal intercourse, had everything to do with shaping [De Quincey's] conception of literature and the arts.' Jordan observes that 'De Quincey's favourite "Pariah" characters...perhaps owe something to [Wordsworth's] various Solitaries' and that 'De Quincey's whole exploitation of his own past undoubtedly owes something to Wordsworth's example of introspection and psychological analysis of the "hiding places" of man's power.' Jordan also discourses on the central 'characteristics the two men had in common', among which he lists 'fervent admiration for Wordsworth's poetry and its world' and 'a tendency to value those solitary experiences in which the "light of sense" went out or was distorted.' David Wright concludes that 'the

aesthetic, intellectual and emotional focus of [De Quincey's] life...was neither opium nor dreams but the poet William Wordsworth.⁵⁰

Wordsworth, however, also has a debt to De Quincey, albeit a much smaller one. Already discussed are the various projects of 1809 through 1818. In addition, De Quincey himself claims that he persuaded Wordsworth not to put quotation marks around a phrase borrowed for the 'Intimations Ode' because they 'had the effect of breaking the current of the passion.' De Quincey also states that it was on his advice that Wordsworth added a footnote on Milton to explain the 'Father Adam' reference in 'The Redbreast Chasing the Butterfly.' Jordan suggests that De Quincey may have encouraged both 'the poet's gradual hardening into a Tory pattern' and his late appreciation of the poetry of John Donne. De Luca argues convincingly 'not only that the Snowdon passage [of the 1805 *Prelude*] influenced De Quincey's *Confessions* but also that De Quincey influenced, in turn, Wordsworth's revisions of the Snowdon passage itself.' In 1829, Wordsworth tells Robinson that 'whatever [De Quincey] writes is worth reading.'⁵¹ There is no way of knowing what or how much De Quincey Wordsworth read. But there can be little question that he continued to benefit from their literary relationship.

For all this influence and interdependence, however, dramatic differences exist between the two. De Quincey was a prose writer dependent on the sale of his essays in order to make a living so that he always composed with one eye fixed steadily on the tastes of his magazine audience. Wordsworth was a poet freed from the necessity of producing work designed solely to sell who always composed in the belief that he had to create the taste by which he was to be enjoyed. De Quincey's articles are a blend of facts, buffoonery, pathos, falsehood and much else. Wordsworth's poems are generally dignified and

meditative. De Quincey's essays are full of tittle-tattle and special pleading. Wordsworth's verse celebrates duty, resolution and independence. De Quincey delights in the sensational, the provocative, the eccentric. Wordsworth looks for what was, and is, and will abide. De Quincey, in short, produced tailor-made essays aimed to divert as well as instruct a mass magazine readership while Wordsworth wrote a poetry of depth and contemplation that sought a fit audience, though few.

Further, De Quincey's writings are laced with intellectualism and Wordsworth's are not. Broadly speaking, De Quincey lived in books and Wordsworth lived in nature. De Quincey's idea of happiness was a winter evening spent inside Dove Cottage with 'a quart of ruby-coloured laudanum...and a book of German metaphysics.' Wordsworth's idea of happiness was days and nights spent outside Dove Cottage, beside the brooks or in the heart of many thousand mists. De Quincey supplemented his rich knowledge of literature and history by reading in a track 'which few of any age will ever follow...such as German metaphysicians, Latin schoolmen, thaumaturgic Platonists, religious Mystics.' Wordsworth revered Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton, translated Ariosto and Tasso and was deeply attracted by the 'clear And solid evidence' of mathematics. But in general he sought the vernal wood, not the library: a 'person of good sense and lively sensibility' he once defined as 'one...who does not talk out of books.'⁵² De Quincey's writings are extraordinary in their range, from biography and fiction through classical scholarship, literary theory and translation to philosophy, political commentary and economics. Wordsworth's writings centre on the human heart by which we live. De Quincey was a scholar; Wordsworth was a man speaking to men.

In addition, De Quincey was fascinated by the Gothic and Wordsworth was not. A darker side does occasionally surface in Wordsworth's verse: in Oswald of *The Borderers*, for example, in 'Nutting', in the note of death that tolls through so many of his childhood memories, in the infamous fourth stanza of the 1815 'Ode.' But in the main Wordsworth's poetry is little concerned with what David Punter has characterised as the three elements which constitute 'the vital effort of Gothic fiction': 'paranoia', 'barbarism' and 'taboo.'⁵³ Indeed, in the 1800 'Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*' Wordsworth lashes out at the three major contemporary strands of the Gothic, the 'frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies and...idle and extravagant stories in verse.'⁵⁴

De Quincey, on the other hand, had a lifelong fascination with the Gothic. In his *Diary*, for example, at the same time that he is writing his letter of adoration to Wordsworth, he is devouring Gothic fiction to the exclusion of almost all other reading material. During the few months of the *Diary* De Quincey reads all or part of Jane West's *The Infidel Father*, Schiller's *The Ghost Seer*, Mrs. Radcliffe's *The Italian* and *Castles of Athllyn and Dunbayne*, Monk Lewis's *Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogene* and "'Tales of Wonder'", Marquis von Grosse's *The Dagger*, Clara Reeve's *The Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon*, Charlotte Smith's *Letters of a Solitary Wanderer*, Sophia Lee's *The Recess*, Thomas Holcroft's translation of *Caroline of Lichtfield*, Alexander Thomson's translation of *Dramatic Pieces from the German*, Walter Scott's 'Glenfinlas, or Lord Ronald's Coronach' and the anonymously published *Hosier's Ghost*, *The Accusing Spirit* and *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*. The *Diary* concludes with a checklist of books that includes Smith's *Emmeline, the Orphan of the Castle*, Mary Robinson's *Angelina*, an anonymous novel entitled *Julietta* and an edition of *German Dramas*,

no doubt of the 'sickly and stupid' kind.⁵⁵ And all of this in just over two months! One can only imagine the amount of Gothic fiction that De Quincey got through in the years both before and after this time.

In a letter of 1804, however, an overwrought De Quincey describes to Wordsworth how when he was fourteen he was saved from the clutches of Gothicism by the *Lyrical Ballads*. At around the age of twelve, he explains,

I gradually came under the dominion of my passions, & from frequent meditation on some characters of our own, & some of ancient story, & afterwards on some of the German Drama, I began to model my conduct & my aims on theirs: by degrees, being dazzled by the glory thrown on such objects by the voice of the people, & miserably deluding myself with the thought that I was led on by high aims, & such as were most worthy of my nature I daily intoxicated myself more & more with that delirious & lawless pleasure which I drew from the hope of elevating my name in authority & kingly splendour above every name that is named upon earth.⁵⁶

De Quincey then details how at fourteen he was saved from this delirium by the 'mild reproach' of nature and by recollections of the 'deep impression made' on him 'by the short poem' 'We Are Seven'.⁵⁷ But as his reading material in the *Diary* makes plain, at seventeen he was still fascinated by 'some characters of our own, & some of ancient story, &...some of the German Drama.' One year later - perhaps after having studied the 1800 'Preface' and its denunciation of the Gothic - De Quincey wrote Wordsworth and passed off his preoccupation with the genre as a transient phase. The claim proved to be quite unjustified.

Indeed, in later years, De Quincey attacked Wordsworth for his inability to appreciate the Gothic. Wordsworth, for De Quincey, was

always 'the most original and meditative man of his own age.'⁵⁸ But to De Quincey's irritation, Wordsworth was also 'careless habitually of all the current literature' and out of sympathy 'with the universal feelings of his age.' 'It is impossible to imagine the perplexity of mind which possessed me', De Quincey writes in *Recollections*

when I heard Wordsworth ridicule many books which I had been accustomed to admire profoundly. For some years, so equally ineradicable was either influence - my recollections, on the one hand, of the books despised, and of their power over my feelings; on the other, my blind and unquestioning veneration for Wordsworth - that I was placed in a strange sort of contradictory life.⁵⁹

According to De Quincey, Wordsworth could not appreciate the splendour of Harriet Lee's 'The German's Tale';

Schiller's *Wallenstein*...was equally unpleasing to him and unintelligible....I should mention my firm persuasion that he has never read one page of Sir Walter Scott's novels...One of Mrs. Radcliffe's romances, viz. *The Italian*, he had, by some strange accident, read, - read, but only to laugh at it.⁶⁰

De Quincey, for his part, praises all four of these writers - and many others in the same line - throughout his writings.⁶¹ Emily De Quincey remarks: 'The novels of [my father's] youth were of the Mrs. Radcliffe order full of mysteries, murders, highwaymen, mysterious people and dark corners.' She adds: 'He never got beyond the Mrs. Radcliffe stage.'⁶²

There is a strong element of the Gothic in De Quincey's writings: his awe at mysterious sects, the revenge and savagery of 'Revolt of the Tartars', the 'horrid inoculation' of his worst opium dreams, his fascination with 'the strong passions of madmen and murderers' and his

assent to the opinion that 'there is no harm in sexual intercourse between a brother and sister (commonly termed *incest*).'⁶² Jan Gordon speaks of De Quincey's 'more or less continuous experimentation with Gothic romance as a genre, including most notably *Klosterheim*.' A.S. Plumtree writes that in 'The Household Wreck' 'feelings of grief and resentment emerge, and the sense of vulnerability and impending catastrophe....It is the...feeling of unrelenting anxiety distended to the proportions of persecution mania.' De Luca argues that in 'The Avenger' there is 'an intensity of nihilistic feeling nowhere present in De Quincey's earlier exercises in the Gothic.' Ian Jack describes De Quincey in the 1821 *Confessions* as 'a mysterious, enigmatic figure, a Werther moved by sorrows beyond our comprehension.'⁶³ Wordsworth's poetry shows almost no evidence of the Gothic; De Quincey's writings are soaked in it.

Perhaps the most important difference between Wordsworth and De Quincey is the way in which they view their past. Wordsworth's believes that 'the Child is Father of the Man' and in *The Prelude* he describes how he grew up 'Fostered alike by beauty and by fear.'⁶⁴ As an adult, however, he has come to regard his experiences of fear as particularly valuable. At the time such moments were felt as a confused half-consciousness, when the frightened or guilty childhood mind perceived the sky as 'not a sky Of earth', when 'among the solitary hills Low breathings' came after him, when

the huge Cliff
Rose up between me and the stars, and still,
With measured motion, like a living thing,
Strode after me.⁶⁵

Later, the adult mind revisits these 'spots of time' but now, instead of finding guilt and fear, it finds evidence of its own power to heighten

and transform the external world. This, in turn, confirms for the poet his status as 'a favoured being', as someone from whose mind there came 'an auxiliar light...which on the setting sun Bestowed new splendor.' For Wordsworth, the central episodes of childhood are essentially ones of 'both pain and fear'⁶⁶ that the adult then taps as a source of strength and creativity.

Confessions has rightly been characterised as 'in its own way...a prose counterpart of *The Prelude*.'⁶⁷ Certainly without this precedent it seems highly unlikely that De Quincey would have thought of writing an imaginative autobiography that explores those select episodes from his past that inform his activity as a dreamer and writer of impassioned prose. Yet there are fundamental differences between these two works. The precept behind *Confessions*, for example, is 'the teenager is father of the man', for De Quincey begins his account when he is 'about seven years old' and in two brief sentences he has reached 'thirteen.'⁶⁸ The primary experiences of *Confessions* take place in London when De Quincey is sixteen.

What is more, whereas in *The Prelude* past suffering is a source of imaginative power, in *Confessions* it is simply a source of more suffering. De Quincey does remark at one point that his 'premature sufferings' in London enabled him to meet 'second assaults of suffering...with a fortitude more confirmed.'⁶⁹ So too, his sufferings produce his impassioned prose, for they provide the insight and the intensity that drives this medium. But unlike Wordsworth, De Quincey is not able to transform past sorrow into a source of future joy. Suffering empowers him to face further suffering, but he is never able to move out of the deep shadow of this struggle. The mind⁵ of both writers draw on and transform the past but only Wordsworth appears able to transform the *emotion* of the past: he is capable, in effect, of

bringing light from darkness, joy from guilt. This is an imaginative power which De Quincey does not possess. His mind seems capable only of bringing darkness from darkness, with just occasional intermittent streaks of light. What light there is in De Quincey's writing comes essentially from the vitality of his prose, his faith in the resilience of the human heart and the courage he displays in his endless war against the darkness. Wordsworth exults and De Quincey survives: that is the fundamental difference between their respective autobiographies. The one constructs his record on the tenet that 'feeling comes in aid Of feeling and diversity of strength Attends us, if but once we have been strong.' The other builds his account in the knowledge that 'years that [are] far asunder [are] bound together by subtle links of suffering derived from a common root.'⁷⁰ Though they share certain thematic and structural concerns, in *The Prelude* Wordsworth looks back on the past and draws strength while in *Confessions* the past comes back upon De Quincey and inflicts further suffering.

The difference between the way in which Wordsworth and De Quincey are funded by their respective pasts is shown even more starkly when *The Prelude* is compared to *Suspiria* because in these two works one can set childhood experience by childhood experience. It is revealing, for example, that in *The Prelude* Wordsworth does not acknowledge a personal Fall from grace, in childhood or at any other time. He suffers guilt and pain as a child, his mother dies when he is eight, he is an orphan at thirteen, he is listless at Cambridge, he faces bitter disappointment over the French Revolution and he becomes blinded by the promises of Godwinian reason. Yet Dorothy, Coleridge, Nature and, in particular, his own more than Roman confidence in his abilities as a poet keep him from complete collapse. In what might be taken as an epigraph for all the major crises he faces, Wordsworth

writes in Book II, 'The props of my affections were removed, And yet the building stood, as if sustained By its own spirit!'⁷¹ Jonathan Wordsworth asserts that

when all is said and done the paradise-lost-and-regained structure of *The Prelude* is never very marked....Is the answer perhaps that as a matter of biographical fact his imagination never had been seriously impaired?....Finally the poem depends more on Wordsworth's sense of having been, *and stayed*, a chosen son, than it does on the Miltonic structure that he tries - sometimes quite hard - to impose.⁷²

In *Suspiria*, on the other hand, not only does De Quincey center his narrative almost exclusively on childhood, but he makes it plain that the death of his sister Elizabeth when he was six marked an immediate and brutal personal Fall from which he never ascends. 'I saw no mercy to myself', he avers, 'a poor frail dependent creature - torn away so suddenly from the prop on which altogether it depended': with Elizabeth's passing

suddenly the first chapter of my life came to a violent termination; that chapter which, even within the gates of recovered Paradise, might merit a remembrance. '*Life is Finished!*' was the secret misgiving of my heart; for the heart of infancy is as apprehensive as that of maturest wisdom in relation to any capital wound inflicted on the happiness. '*Life is Finished! Finished it is!*' was the hidden meaning that, half-consciously to myself, lurked within my sighs....The peace, the rest, the central security which belong to love that is past all understanding - these could return no more.⁷³

The Wordsworth of *The Prelude* avoids the Fall that the De Quincey of *Suspiria* suffers almost immediately. More to the point, De Quincey's inability to bring light from the darkness is even more pronounced in

Suspiria, for in his childhood his grief was at its fiercest and the shadow it has cast over his future life the most overwhelming: 'The particular case to which I refer in my own childhood, was one of intolerable grief', he writes; 'a trial, in fact, more severe than many people at *any* age are called upon to stand....The terrific grief which I passed through, drove a shaft for me into the worlds of death and darkness which never again closed.'⁷⁴ In *Suspiria*, De Quincey goes back to his earliest years in order to emphasize that his Fall occurred - and his acutest misery began - well *before* any of the incidents recounted in *Confessions*. As a result, one can now compare like with like: in *The Prelude*, childhood is the fountainhead of a blessedness which even yet remains; in *Suspiria*, it marks the bitter commencement of De Quincey's long and debilitating war with sorrow.

The fact that Wordsworth denies and De Quincey acknowledges a personal Fall means that in *The Prelude* Wordsworth largely abjures a Christian vision while in *Suspiria* De Quincey works decidedly within one. Wordsworth has intimations of heaven on *earth* and champions

the very world which is the world
Of all of us, the place in which, in the end,
We find our happiness, or not at all.⁷⁵

De Quincey experiences hell on earth but considers our endless tribulations as God's way of ensuring our redemption: "'This is sad: this is piteous",' avers the Dark Interpreter as he gazes on the sunken city of Savannah-La-Mar: "'but less would not have sufficed for the purposes of God".' De Quincey adopts this position as regards suffering in an attempt to account for what he characterises as God's 'mysterious anger.'⁷⁶ J. Hillis Miller suggests that for De Quincey God has disappeared or that 'man knows God through the absence of God.'⁷⁷ But on the contrary, God for De Quincey is repeatedly present: in *Suspiria*,

for example, God sits upon the throne that the young boy pursues in vision, 'God is supplicated on behalf of "all sick persons and young children"', 'the voice of God wrap[s] itself as in a cloud of music', 'God speaks to children..in dreams', God commissions Levana, 'God smote Savannah-La-Mar.'⁷⁸ The problem for De Quincey is that God behaves mysteriously and ruthlessly, not that He has disappeared or is absent.⁷⁹ De Quincey perceived early that 'God...moved not as *we* moved - walked not as *we* walk - thought not as *we* think.'⁸⁰ He suffers crippling grief in a Christian world presided over by a Christian God and he cannot understand why: his question is not 'where is God' but, rather, 'why is God so willing to let me suffer.' De Quincey's answer is to regard suffering as beneficial, as the necessary agency God employs in order that He may unfold the capacities of our spirit. In 1815, Robinson recorded Wordsworth's astonishing remark, 'I have no need of a Redeemer'⁸¹; earlier, in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth had made it plain that he thought happiness was to be found on earth or nowhere. De Quincey, on the other hand, has great need of a Redeemer and the master theme of *Suspiria* is that only through suffering do we gain salvation. In 'Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow' he explains that after he has endured the kingdoms of all three sisters he shall 'rise again *before* he dies.'⁸² And had he finished *Suspiria* perhaps this ascent would have taken place. But in the work as it stands, De Quincey does not rise; only his sighs ascend from the depths. In *The Prelude*, the props of Wordsworth's affections are removed on several occasions and yet the building still stands - paradise sustained; in *Suspiria*, the single prop of De Quincey's affection is removed and at once the building is swallowed by the abyss - paradise lost.

De Quincey is at pains to insist, however, that his childhood was not one of utter misery. 'Upon me', he states,

as upon others scattered thinly by tens and twenties over every thousand years, fell too powerfully and too early the vision of life. The horror of life mixed itself already in earliest youth with the heavenly sweetness of life; that grief, which one in a hundred has sensibility enough to gather from the sad retrospect of life in its closing stages, for me shed its dew as a prelibation upon the fountains of life whilst yet sparkling to the morning sun....Is this the description of an early youth passed in the shades of gloom? No, but of a youth passed in the divinest happiness. And if the reader has (which so few have) the passion, without which there is no reading of the legend and superscription upon man's brow, if he is not (as most are) deaf to the grave to every *deep* note that sighs upwards from the Delphic caves of human life, he will know that the rapture of life (or any thing which by approach can merit that name) does not arise, unless as perfect music arises - music of Mozart or Beethoven - by the confluence of the mighty and terrific discords with the subtle concords. Not by contrast, or as reciprocal foils do these elements act, which is the feeble conception of many, but by union. They are the sexual forces in music: "male and female created he them"; and these mighty antagonists do not put forth their hostilities by repulsion, but by deepest attraction.⁸³

There is more here than the impassioned utterance of De Quincey's favourite law of antagonisms and a frame of reference that suggests his kinship with William Blake. De Quincey is also concerned to transmute Wordsworthian lore to accord with his own experience. Thus, while Wordsworth 'grew up/ Fostered alike by beauty and by fear', De Quincey 'in earliest youth' found that 'the horror of life mixed itself already...with the heavenly sweetness of life.' De Quincey also adapts the Wordsworthian position that 'fear' is the most important side of this equation by emphasising throughout *Suspiria* the greater significance of 'the horror of life.' De Quincey, too, borrows the idea of

the mentor that oversees childhood education, but whereas Wordsworth is singled out as a favoured being by the goddess of Nature, De Quincey is chosen with 'others scattered thinly by tens and twenties over every thousand years' by the goddess of Grief. Wordsworthian doctrines stand firmly behind *Confessions*, and in particular *Suspiria*, but De Quincey reshapes them in order that they may be brought into line with his different and much darker 'vision of life.'

Throughout his career De Quincey was an admirer and disciple of Wordsworth: the poet appears in every corner of his work. Wordsworth, too, respected De Quincey's literary ability and drew on it. But De Quincey had an intellect and a series of experiences remarkably different to Wordsworth's. In some instances this meant he simply broke with Wordsworthian lore, whether it be because Wordsworth did not love books or because he could not appreciate the sublimity of the Gothic. In others, it meant he kept the roots of Wordsworthian lore, but brought from them the bitter fruit of his own circumstances. Wordsworth exerted an enormous influence on De Quincey's career as a writer, but it is a testimony to the vitality of De Quincey's own vision that it was enhanced, and not undermined, by the genius of the poet.

Chapter V

The Rhetorician: Through the *Strife* Which Besets us

Did you read *Blackwood*?, and in that case have you had deep delight in an exquisite paper by the Opium-eater, which my heart trembled through from end to end? What a poet that man is! how he vivifies words, or deepens them, and gives them profound significance.

--Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 1843¹

In 1848 Thomas Babington Macaulay issued the first two volumes of his *History of England*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels produced their *Communist Manifesto* and Thomas De Quincey published an essay on 'The Poetry of Pope.' In his introductory remarks Macaulay announced that the history of England 'during the last hundred and sixty years [was] eminently the history of physical, of moral, and of intellectual improvement' and that no man who was 'correctly informed as to the past [would] be disposed to take a morose or desponding view of the present.'² In the ^{same} year Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels surveyed all of Europe and reached less sanguine conclusions:

Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeoisie epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is

holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.³

Macaulay saw capitalism effecting a gradual amelioration in every aspect of English society while Marx waited impatiently for workers to unite and overthrow the capitalist system. The outlook of the two men was similar, however, in that both expected Utopia: the difference was that, as A.J.P. Taylor puts it, 'Macaulay thought that Utopia had already arrived with the triumph of the bourgeoisie, whereas Marx expected the same result from the triumph of the proletariat.'⁴

De Quincey's essay on 'Pope' is not immediately recognizable as offering a third perspective on the social and political state of England as it approached the middle of the nineteenth century. Yet it is in this essay that he offers his most compelling definition of the 'literature of knowledge' and the 'literature of power.' In particular, he stresses that the 'literature of power' has a moral function, that it is one of the primary agencies through which the heart of man is invigorated and renewed. 'Were it not', he avers,

that human sensibilities are ventilated and continually called out into exercise by the great phenomena of infancy, or of real life as it moves through chance and change, or of literature as it recombines these elements in the mimicries of poetry, romance &c., it is certain that, like any animal power or muscular energy falling into disuse, all such sensibilities would gradually droop and dwindle. It is in relation to these great *moral* capacities of man that the literature of power, as contradistinguished from that of knowledge, lives and has its field of action. It is concerned with what is highest in man....Tragedy, romance, fairy tale, or epopee, all alike restore to man's mind the ideals of justice, of hope, of truth, of mercy, of retribution....It is certain that, were it not for the literature of power, these

ideals would often remain amongst us as mere arid notional forms; whereas, by the creative forces put forth in literature, they gain a vernal life of restoration and germinate into vital activities.⁵

The 'literature of power', then, galvanizes and reinstates the energies of man's heart. Without it, we would lapse even closer to moral and intellectual torpor.

One of De Quincey's most significant contributions to the 'literature of power' is *Suspiria de Profundis*, a work he himself describes as 'the *ne plus ultra*, as regards the feeling and the power to express it, which I can ever hope to attain'⁶ and which he produces just three years prior to his discourse on 'power' in 'Pope.' In the 'Introductory Notice' to *Suspiria* De Quincey speaks explicitly about the current state of England, about 'the gathering agitation of our present English life.' And when he looks back over the past fifty years he shudders:

What by the...mighty revolutions amongst the kingdoms of the earth, what by the continual development of vast physical agencies - steam in all its applications, light getting under harness as a slave for man, powers from heaven descending upon education and accelerations of the press, powers from hell (as it might seem, but these also celestial) coming round upon artillery and the forces of destruction - the eye of the calmest observer is troubled; the brain is haunted as if by some jealousy of ghostly beings moving amongst us.⁷

Clearly De Quincey did not share Macaulay's optimism regarding the contemporary state of England. Indeed, like Marx, De Quincey saw 'everlasting uncertainty and agitation' as the distinguishing characteristic of English society over the past fifty years.

At the centre of Marx's thought, however, lies the famous belief that the turbulence of the day is leading inexorably toward the crisis when the wickedness of capitalism will be replaced by the justness of socialism. De Quincey, on the other hand, sees the same turbulence as leading toward ruin and he believes that its progress must be arrested. Set against the 'colossal pace' of modern technological 'advance', then, he urges 'counter-forces of corresponding magnitude, forces in the direction of religion or profound philosophy, that shall radiate centrifugally against this storm of life so perilously centripetal.'⁸ Modern man, De Quincey feels, has given his heart away. Industry and science have been allowed to proceed unchecked and 'the action of thought and feeling' has become 'dissipated and squandered.' 'The natural tendency of so chaotic a tumult', he writes, 'must be to evil; for some minds to lunacy, for others to a reagency of fleshly torpor.'⁹

De Quincey's attempt to retard the insidiousness of this 'tumult' is the production of his own 'literature of power' in the form of what he calls 'impassioned prose', an intricate and evocative literary medium fashioned by him to explore and exercise the 'great *moral* capacities of man' and thereby contribute to those 'counter-forces of corresponding magnitude' that he feels must be developed to check 'this storm of life.' *Suspiria*, along with *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* and *The English Mail-Coach*, constitute De Quincey's greatest contribution to the 'literature of power' for in these three works he uses impassioned prose not only to incarnate the passion and the wisdom latent in grief, childhood and dreams but to reveal that passion and wisdom as crucial weapons in man's battle against industrialization. In 1848, then, Macaulay proclaimed that under capitalism all was well, Marx predicted that under communism all would soon be well and De Quincey believed that all was far from well - unless latent powers were mobilised.

Macaulay and Marx charted external events, De Quincey looked inward. While they extolled different political systems, he championed the strength of the individual human heart. The lore of Macaulay or of Marx still reaches a wide audience. 'Power' via 'impassioned prose' as manifest in *Confessions*, *Suspiria* and *The Mail-Coach* is De Quincey's attempt to put man back in touch with his heart.

Prose fascinated De Quincey. He examines the question 'What was it that first produced into this world that celebrated thing called *Prose*?' He touches on 'the characteristic difference, of poetry as distinguished from prose.' He outlines 'the two capital secrets in the art of prose composition.'¹⁰ He insists, above all, that prose is as difficult and as significant a medium as poetry. Prose is often seen as 'simply the negation of verse', De Quincey declares, with 'no separate laws of its own':

But this is ignorance, though a pretty common ignorance. To walk well, it is not enough that a man abstains from dancing....To forbear singing is not, therefore, to speak well or to read well: each of which office rests upon a separate art of its own. Numerous laws of transition, connexion, preparation, are different for a writer in verse and a writer in prose. Each mode of composition is a great art; well executed, is the highest and most difficult of arts.¹¹

Though he could not have known the anecdote, De Quincey would have enjoyed Walter Pater's remark when first introduced to Oscar Wilde: 'Why do you always write poetry?', Pater asked. 'Why do you not write prose? Prose is so much more difficult.'¹²

De Quincey's interest in prose extends as far back as the Greeks. He refers to Herodotus as 'the general father of prose composition' and praises him for 'his picturesque vivacity and his shifting scenery.'¹³ But De Quincey dislikes 'the form of dialogue so obstinately maintained

by the earliest philosophers', particularly Plato and Xenophon, because he thinks it 'had the unhappy effect of impressing, from the earliest era of Attic literature a colloquial taint upon the prose literature of that country.'¹⁴ De Quincey admits, however, that 'in Plato, there is a gloomy grandeur at times from the elementary mysteries of man's situation and origin, snatches of music from some older and Orphic philosophy.'¹⁵ De Quincey thinks Aristotle's prose style 'arid' but 'much more dignified, or at least more grave and suitable to philosophic speculation, than that of any man before him.'¹⁶ But for De Quincey, Demosthenes is the greatest of the Greek prose writers. 'I, from my childhood', he writes,

had been a reader, nay, a student of Demosthenes; and simply for this reason, that, having meditated profoundly on the true laws and philosophy of diction, and of what is vaguely denominated style, and finding nothing of any value in modern writers upon this subject, and not much as regards the grounds and ultimate principles even in the ancient rhetoricians, I have been reduced to collect my opinions from the great artists and practitioners, rather than from the theorists; and, among those artists, in the most plastic of languages, I hold Demosthenes to have been the greatest.¹⁷

De Quincey remarks on almost all of the major Roman prose writers. Cicero is 'the mighty master of language for the Pagan world', notable particularly for the 'pomp and continuous grandeur' of his style.¹⁸ De Quincey is 'a great reader of Livy' and an enthusiastic admirer of later Roman prose writers like 'the two Plinys, the two Senecas, Tacitus, Quintilian, and others.' 'Not one of these men could have seen Cicero', he asserts;

all were divided by more than one generation; and yet, most unquestionably, though all were too reasonable

to have fancied themselves any match for the almighty orator in public speaking, not one but was an equally accomplished artist in written composition, and under a law of artificial style far more difficult to manage.¹⁹

De Quincey writes at length on the development of English prose literature. He traces, for example, the development of the English language through some of the earliest prose works. 'In its elementary period', he avers,

[the English language] takes a different name - the name of Anglo-Saxon; and so rude was it and barren at one stage of this rudimentary form that in the *Saxon Chronicle* we find not more than a few hundred words, perhaps six to eight hundred words, perpetually revolving, and most of which express some idea in close relation to the state of war....Such is the shallow brook or rivulet of our language in its infant stage. Thence it devolves a stream continually enlarging down to the Norman era. Through five centuries (commencing with the century of Bede) used as the vernacular idiom for the intercourse of life by a nation expanding gradually under the ripening influence of a pure religion and a wise jurisprudence, - benefiting, besides, by the culture it received from a large succession of learned ecclesiastics, who too often adopted the Latin for the vehicle of their literary commerce with the Continent, but also in cases past all numbering wrote (like the great patriot Alfred) for popular purposes in Saxon, - even this rude dialect grew and widened its foundations, until it became adequate to general intellectual purposes.²⁰

De Quincey's interest in the 'Middle English' period of prose is slight. He mentions Sir John Mandeville's *Travels* and declares of Sir Thomas Malory's romance, 'it is pretty clear that Herodotus stood, and meant to stand, on that isthmus between the regions of poetry and blank unimpassioned prose which in modern literature is occupied by

such works as *Mort d'Arthur*.²¹ De Quincey describes himself as 'one who loves and venerates Chaucer'²² but he makes no explicit reference to Chaucer's prose.

The bulk of De Quincey's interest in English prose is centred in the 'Modern English' period and on three figures – Sir Thomas Browne, Jeremy Taylor and Edmund Burke, with a general disparagement of post-Restoration prose writers like Dryden, Addison and Swift. De Quincey revels in the intricate cadences and extended rhythms that dominated English prose in the first six decades of the seventeenth century. But with the Restoration English prose abandoned the ornate and became plain, a step that De Quincey felt greatly reduced its range and power. Thomas Sprat, however, in his *History of the Royal Society* of 1667, declared himself decidedly in favour of the change: 'of all the Studies of men', he writes, 'nothing may be sooner obtain'd than this vicious abundance of *Phrase*, this trick of *Metaphors*, this volubility of *Tongue*, which makes so great a noise in the World.' And as for the Royal Society,

they have...been most rigorous in putting into execution the only Remedy that can be found for this *extravagance*, and that has been a constant Resolution to reject all amplification, digressions, and swellings of style; and return back to the primitive purity and shortness, when men deliver'd so many *things* almost in an equal number of *words*. They have exacted from all their members a close, naked, natural way of speaking, positive expressions, clear sense, a native easiness, bringing all things as near the Mathematical plainness as they can.²³

Over two hundred years later, Matthew Arnold declares that 'the Restoration marks the real moment of birth of our modern English prose' and he describes 'the victory of this prose style, "clear, plain,

and short," over..."the old style, long and heavy"' as 'the distinguishing achievement, in the history of English letters, of the century following the Restoration.'²⁴

Arnold, moreover, sees the victory of the plain style as extending from Dryden's day through De Quincey's and toward the twentieth century. 'The practical genius of our people', he insists, 'could not but urge irresistibly to the production of a real prose style, because for the purposes of modern life the old English prose, the prose of Milton and Taylor, is cumbersome, unavailable, impossible.'²⁵ And indeed, throughout the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, Arnold's 'modern' style is the dominant form of prose expression, its plain and declarative nature making it an ideal instrument with which to target vast sections of an ever-expanding reading public.

However, as early as the second half of the eighteenth century a reaction sets in against the plain style, a reaction that begins with Samuel Johnson, passes to Edward Gibbon and is confirmed by Burke. Johnson's prose is often admirably concise: John Ruskin describes it as 'just, and clear', Arnold as 'always plain and modern.'²⁶ But Johnson's prose is also notorious for its circumlocution, its 'dictionary' words and its antithetical movement. It is a prose, generally speaking, ampler and more elaborate than the prose of the earlier decades of the century. Gibbon's style is more decidedly ornate than Johnson's. Contemporary critics cavilled because they saw its 'affectation' as subverting 'the more natural and nervous phraseology of the English language' but they allowed that the prose was 'brilliant, harmonious, and dignified'²⁷, a successful if, in their opinion, undesirable shift away from the plain style. Burke's prose, particularly that written toward the end of his career, is the most florid, thunderous, rhetorical prose of the eighteenth century, far removed from the lightness of

Addison or the terseness of Swift, far beyond the stateliness of Johnson and the flourishings of Gibbon. *The Analytical Review*, in its assessment of *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, describes Burke's style as 'splendid'; and *The Monthly Review* remarks, 'the characteristic feature of its diction, of its sentiments, and of its arguments, is amplification.'²⁸

The latter half of the eighteenth century sees a second reaction against plainness. The novel as a literary genre was taking shape in the first half of the century with the pioneering efforts of writers like Daniel De Foe, Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding. But for many the results of these efforts were drearily matter-of-fact. 'Richardson may have been sentimental and Fielding vulgar', writes Robert Keily in his *The Romantic Novel in England*, 'but both were concerned with more or less ordinary people speaking common English and facing familiar problems.'²⁹ Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, 1764, William Beckford's *Vathek*, 1786, and Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, 1796, are among many Gothic or 'Romance' novels that rebel against this so-called ordinariness. These novels are filled with bizarre action, flamboyant or grotesque characters and luxuriously artificial sceneries, all rendered in highly stylised language. Clara Reeve, whose *The Old English Baron* of 1778 is an avowed imitation of Walpole's *Otranto*, draws an instructive distinction between what people like Fielding and Richardson were writing and what was being presented by Walpole and his successors. 'The Novel', she writes, 'is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it was written. The Romance in lofty and elevated language, describes what has never happened nor is likely to.'³⁰ Some years earlier Walpole had said of his *Otranto*, 'I gave reign to my imagination; visions and passions choked me. I wrote it in spite of rules, critics, and philosophers; it seems to

me the better for that.' He adds that the book was not written for the present age, 'which wanted only *cold reason*.'³¹ Eighteenth-century prose, then, though it begins with a concentration on colloquial ease, lucidity and the rational, gradually admits a style of great ornamentation and artificiality.

By the commencement of the nineteenth century, prose has become a medium of great variety. The expansion of the reading public has continued unabated throughout the eighteenth century. The novel is reaching progressively larger audiences while it continues to develop and mutate as a literary form. What is more, new and increasingly diversified readerships are being both tapped and created by the multifarious operations of the periodical press. Audiences are being given far greater choice at the same time that they are becoming steadily more open to the style, form and quirks of different kinds of prose expression. Yet for all this diversity, much of the prose of the opening decades of this century is distinguished by one central characteristic: a sense of pleasure in energy. Perhaps this is a natural effect of the passions roused by the events and repercussions of the Napoleonic War. Perhaps, too, it owes something to the strife caused by the quickening pace of industrial and technological development. But for whatever the source, prose in the early nineteenth century is pervaded by a fierceness, the feeling of being carried along or overwhelmed, an appeal to emotion, the sense of shouting someone down. Monologue predominates rather than dialogue. Pathos, patriotic sentiment, terror and injustice are openly exploited in an effort to enliven audiences and communicate excited feeling. Energy emanates from the prose as writers of every kind struggle to engage the public and make themselves heard amongst a storm of contradictory passions, positions and opinions.

Nevertheless, despite both the diversity that exists on the surface and the strong unifying current of energy that runs underneath, there yet remains a sense in which the prose styles of this era can be broadly divided into two camps. There is, on the one hand, Arnold's 'plain' style or what Hazlitt in an 1821 essay designates the 'familiar' style. 'It utterly rejects not only all unmeaning pomp', Hazlitt declares of this style,

but all low, cant phrases, and loose, unconnected *slipshod* allusions. It is not to take the first word that offers, but the best word in common use; it is not to throw words together in any combinations we please, but to follow and avail ourselves of the true idiom of the language. To write a genuine familiar or truly English style, is to write as any one would speak in common conversation, who had a thorough command and choice of words, or who could discourse with ease, force, and perspicuity, setting aside all pedantic and oratorical flourishes.

'It is easy to affect a pompous style', he adds, 'to use a word twice as big as the thing you want to express: it is not so easy to pitch upon the very word that exactly fits it.'³² Generally speaking, Hazlitt and Arnold, as well as William Cobbett, Leigh Hunt, Charles Lamb and Robert Southey are exponents of this 'familiar' style.

On the other hand, with the commencement of the nineteenth century, the prose of seventeenth-century writers like Browne and Taylor and the more recent bravuras of Burke and the Gothic novelists are developed and assimilated by a series of stylists beginning with Wordsworth and Coleridge and passing up through De Quincey, Ruskin and Pater. As early as 1755 Johnson, in the 'Preface' to his *Dictionary*, writes that he has 'studiously endeavoured to collect examples and authorities from the writers before the Restoration, whose works I

regard as *the wells of English undefiled*, as the pure sources of genuine diction.³³ Years later Coleridge's echoes this statement and speaks for several of his contemporaries when he asserts that

from the common opinion that the English style attained its greatest perfection in and about Queen Anne's reign I altogether dissent; not only because it is in one species alone in which it can be pretended that the writers of that age excelled their predecessors; but also because the specimens themselves are not equal, upon sound principles of judgment, to much that had been produced before.

For Coleridge, as for fellow stylists like De Quincey and Ruskin, not Dryden and Swift but 'the principal writers before the Restoration are the great patterns or integers of English style.'³⁴ The prose of the first half of the nineteenth century, then, despite both its diversity and its distinctive energy, is broadly divisible into two bands: the 'plain' or 'familiar' style championed by Arnold and Hazlitt and the 'elaborate' style favoured by Coleridge, De Quincey and their successors.

The reappearance in the nineteenth century of the elaborate style owes much to the writings of Browne, particularly his *Religio Medici*, 1642, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, 1646, and *Hydriotaphia, Urne-Buriall*, 1658. Browne was an immensely learned man, a master of nine languages and a speculator on such diverse topics as cartography, medicine, history and philology. The greater part of his prose, like the greater part of Taylor's and Burke's prose, treads a middle path between the unadorned and the ornate, never completely descending to the abrupt yet rising only occasionally to the splendid. Like Taylor and Burke, however, Browne is best remembered – and was most beloved by writers from the nineteenth century – for just those moments when his prose does rise to the splendid. Such moments, in Browne's case, are

distinguished by a tone of dignity and pensiveness, a preponderance of the Latinate, slow-moving sentences of striking harmonic complexity, and an ardent sympathy with the subject matter. Browne's elaborate prose manner is especially evident in *Hydriotaphia*, where the recent unearthing of forty or fifty ancient urns leads him to sombre broodings on time, death and immortality.

Many of De Quincey's contemporaries praised Browne. Hunt describes Browne as possessing 'great power of language, and a rapid succession of ideas amounting to the multitudinous: and when he gets out of his dogmas, we follow his guesses into the other world with something approaching to reverence.' Coleridge characterises Browne as 'exuberant in conception and conceit, dignified, hyper-latinistic, a quiet and sublime enthusiast; yet a fantast, a humourist, a brain with a twist.' Lamb calls *Hydriotaphia* an 'obscure but gorgeous prose-composition' and lists Browne as one of the two people in English literature 'whom he should feel the greatest pleasure to encounter on the floor of his apartment in their nightgown and slippers.' For De Quincey, Browne is 'deep, tranquil, and majestic as Milton, silently premeditating and "disclosing his golden couplets", as under some genial instinct of incubation.'³⁵

The renaissance of elaborate prose in the nineteenth century also owes a great deal to Taylor. Taylor published a large body of theological writings, including sermons, prayer manuals, a life of Christ entitled *The Great Exemplar*, 1649, works that espoused controversial religious ideas, most notably his 1647 appeal for religious toleration in *A Discourse of the Liberty of Prophesying* and a long, casuistical discussion of religious and moral questions called *Ductor Dubitantium*, a piece published in two huge folios in 1660 and considered by Taylor to be his masterpiece. Taylor also published three

main devotional works, the *Holy Living*, 1650, the *Holy Dying*, 1651, and *The Worthy Communicant*, 1660. In each of these works he writes a melodic and fluent style that he is able to modify to suit the cause of explanation, exhortation or condemnation. Like Browne and Burke, Taylor was admired by De Quincey and his contemporaries primarily for those occasions when he left the mellifluousness of his customary style and fashioned a prose of far greater ornamentation and intensity. But unlike the solemnity of Browne, Taylor's heightened moments are lyrical, imaginative, luminous. His greatest gift as a writer is his ability to speak through metaphor, to build sustained passages of eloquence by incarnating his profoundest theological and metaphysical lucubrations in images of a setting sun, a budding rose, the course of a river, the flight of a bird and so on. While Browne concentrates on the mysterious and evocative, Taylor crafts word-pictures of remarkable beauty and grace. In *Holy Dying* especially, through a series of vivid and naturalistic set pieces, Taylor deals with such themes as the sorrows of death, the transience of joy and the succour provided by an abiding Christian faith.

Enthusiasm for Taylor amongst De Quincey's peers was almost unbounded. 'When the name of Jeremy Taylor is no longer remembered with reverence', Hazlitt states, 'genius will have become a mockery, and virtue an empty shade!' Lamb declares that 'Bp. Taylor has more and more beautiful imagery, and...more knowledge and description of human life and manners than any prose book in the language; he has more delicacy and sweetness than any mortal, the "gentle" Shakespeare hardly excepted.' In *Nightmare Abbey*, Thomas Love Peacock has his Coleridge caricature Mr. Flosky speak 'in a tone of ruefulness most jeremitaylorically pathetic.' Coleridge himself asks, 'Why should I not call Taylor a poet?....What Bard of ancient or modern times has

surpassed, in richness of language, in fertility of fancy, in majesty of sentiment, in grace of imagery, this Spenser of English prose.' After her father had died, Emily De Quincey writes, 'I should think any one would guess from his works what a great admiration he had for Shakespeare and Milton but I do not think that people would gather the same opinion as regards Jeremy Taylor and yet I think he would have placed him beside those two great towers of strength.'³⁶ De Quincey himself, though he points to essential differences between the two, groups Taylor and Browne together as

if not absolutely the foremost in the accomplishments of art...undoubtedly the richest, the most dazzling, and, with reference to their matter, the most captivating, of all rhetoricians. In them first, and perhaps...in them only, are the two opposite forces of eloquent passion and rhetorical fancy brought into exquisite equilibrium, - approaching, receding - attracting, repelling, - blending, separating, - chasing and chased, as in a fugue, - and again lost in a delightful interfusion, so as to create a middle species of composition, more various and stimulating to the understanding than pure eloquence, more gratifying to the affections than naked rhetoric.³⁷

Burke was best known to the writers of the first half of the nineteenth century for his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 1790, a work that condemns the actions of the French revolutionaries and extols the British constitution as a foundation for prosperity and security. Burke's writings are characterised by passion and indignation, whether they be on the question of American independence, the impeachment of Warren Hastings or further reflections on the course of the revolution in France. As distinguished from Browne and Taylor, Burke has a gift for aphorism, an ability to encapsulate the gist

of his argument in a few words. Burke's customary style, however, is a fluent middle style midway between terseness and ornamentation, and in this he resembles his seventeenth century predecessors, as he does in his tendency to occasionally abandon the middle style for a prose of greater complexity. But unlike Browne's cultivation of the pensive, or Taylor's fashioning of the eloquent, Burke builds his heightened moments upon pathos and declamation. There is a fury that characterises Burke's most elevated scenes, a fury brought on by his belief in the justness of his own cause and his conviction that the cause of his opponent is rooted in ignorance or wickedness. Burke is particularly violent in later works like *A Letter to a Noble Lord*, 1796, and the *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 1796-1797, where he directs passages of fierce invective against the French revolutionaries and his own political opponents in Britain.

Hazlitt is among many who reviled Burke's politics but he had an unbounded admiration for his genius. 'If there are greater prose-writers than Burke, they either lie out of my course of study, or are beyond my sphere of comprehension.' In *The Friend* Coleridge describes Burke as 'an Orator, whose eloquence has taken away for Englishmen all cause of humiliation from the names of Demosthenes and Cicero...a Statesman, who has left our Language a bequest of Glory unrivalled and all our own.' Wordsworth adds the 'Genius of Burke' passage to the 1850 *Prelude*, lauding the 'high disdain' with which Burke explodes 'upstart Theory' and denounces 'all systems built on abstract rights.' Arnold not unexpectedly declares that Burke writes 'extravagant prose; prose too much suffered to indulge its caprices; prose at too great a distance from the centre of good taste....prose somewhat barbarously rich and overloaded.' Yet even Arnold asserts that Burke is 'our greatest English prose-writer.' 'All hail to Edmund

Burke', proclaims De Quincey in his essay on 'Rhetoric', 'supreme writer of his century, the man of the largest and finest understanding!'³⁸

De Quincey and his contemporaries were drawn to the prose of Browne, Taylor and Burke for a number of reasons. Part of the attraction of Browne and Taylor lay in their old words and obsolete ideas. Coleridge, De Quincey and especially Lamb enjoyed these mementos of the past and often introduced elements of them into their own work. 'Damn the age', Lamb once said, 'I will write for Antiquity!' Hazlitt declares: 'Mr. Lamb is the only imitator of old English style I can read with pleasure; and he is so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of his authors, that the idea of imitation is almost done away.'³⁹ The years before the Restoration also appealed to what was backward-glancing or melancholy in the spirit of the early to mid-nineteenth century. The English Civil War was perceived by many as a time when great men walked the earth. In 1802 Wordsworth cries out to Milton: 'We are selfish men;/ Oh! raise us up, return to us again;/ And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.' In the *Confessions* De Quincey states that he has made himself 'minutely and critically familiar with one period of English history, viz. the period of the Parliamentary War, having been attracted by the moral grandeur of some who figured in that day, and by the many interesting memoirs which survive those unquiet times.' Coleridge knew 'no portion of history which a man might write with so much pleasure as that of the great struggle in the time of Charles I., because he may feel the profoundest respect for both parties.' In 1826 Carlyle writes,

I have almost quitted modern reading; lower down than the Restoration I rarely venture in English. These men, these Hookers, Bacons, Brownes were *men*; but for our present "men of letters", our dandy wits,

our utilitarian philosophers, our novel, play, sonnet
and song manufactures, I shall only say: May the Lord
pity us and them!⁴⁰

Some of the writers of De Quincey's age were particularly fond of Taylor because of his religious convictions. Taylor's time was one of enormous political and social upheaval and Taylor himself endured many ordeals, including the deaths of his wife and of his patroness, Lady Carbery, and persecution, first to a limited extent by the Puritans and later by a rancorous group of Ulster Presbyterians. Yet throughout his life Taylor retained a strong Christian faith. Coleridge thought Taylor was 'perverted by his being a favourite and follower of Laud' and argued on occasion that Taylor had 'images, conceptions, notions... - but no *Ideas*;' and that his 'Opinion' was 'all weather-eaten, dim, noseless, a *Ghost in Marble*.'⁴¹ But Coleridge also wrote that he 'should appeal with confidence to Jeremy Taylor on all points of discipline, and in the Eucharist', that Taylor was the 'great and shining Light of our Church in the aera of her intellectual splendour' and that 'since the Apostolic age, never did the Spirit of Supplication move on the deeps of a human soul with a more genial life, or more profoundly impregnate the rich gifts of a happy nature...than in the person of Jeremy Taylor.'⁴²

John Henry Newman, in the early days of the Oxford movement, conceived of himself and his fellow Tractarians as defenders of the Anglican theological tradition as enshrined in the writings of Hooker, Taylor and other seventeenth-century theologians. 'I had supreme confidence in our cause', Newman writes in the *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*; 'we were upholding that primitive Christianity which was delivered for all time by the early teachers of the Church, and which was registered and attested in the Anglican formularies and by the Anglican divines.'⁴³ Newman, of course, gradually shifted from this position to Catholicism

but Taylor remained one of his favourites. This is largely because Taylor too displays a tendency toward Rome;⁴⁴ because Newman respected Taylor's theological opinions and was able to incorporate them into a number of different contexts, including arguments about points of doctrine in *A Grammar of Assent* and the closing chapter of the *Apologia*;⁴⁵ and because in Taylor there are subtle shifts of theological emphasis and an undercurrent of subjectivism that distinguishes him from his seventeenth century contemporaries and allies him more closely with nineteenth-century religious thought.⁴⁶

For De Quincey, who 'maintained that the main bulk of English philosophy has always hidden itself in the English divinity', Taylor's writings combine the secular and the holy. In Taylor, De Quincey declares, 'are exhibited all the *practical* aspects of philosophy; of philosophy as it bears upon Life, upon Ethics, and upon Transcendent Prudence.'⁴⁷ Unlike Coleridge and Newman, however, De Quincey was never deeply vexed by theological questions. Nevertheless, he was acutely conscious of the irreverence and lack of faith of many of his contemporaries⁴⁸ and, like Coleridge and Newman, he was undoubtedly attracted by the steadfastness of Taylor's optimism and religious conviction. Taylor, for instance, is a great believer in the power of prayer. 'Since prayer can obtain every thing', he writes with characteristic eloquence,

it can open the windows of heaven and shut the gates of hell; it can put a holy constraint upon God, and detain an Angel till he leave a blessing; it can open the treasures of rain and soften the iron ribs of rock, till they melt into tears and a flowing river; prayer can unclasp the girdles of the North, saying to a mountain of ice; be thou removed hence, and cast into the bottom of the Sea; it can arrest the Sun in the midst of his course, and send the swift winged winds upon our errand; and all those strange things and

secret decrees and unrevealed transactions which are above the clouds and far beyond the regions of the stars shall combine in ministry and advantages for the praying man.⁴⁹

Writing in an age drifting inexorably toward Friedrich Nietzsche's insistence in 1882 that 'God is dead'⁵⁰, Coleridge, Newman and De Quincey undoubtedly found both comfort and strength in the many passages of Taylor which promote the powers of a living Christian faith.

Finally, De Quincey and his contemporaries were drawn to Browne, Taylor and Burke because they considered the rich, occasionally exalted, prose style of these writers able to chart the complications and depths of issues with a comprehensiveness that was simply beyond the range of the correct, familiar style. Plain prose was only capable of plain subjects, they argued. And conversely, grand subjects demanded grand prose. 'It is true that these short and unconnected sentences are easily and instantly understood', Coleridge writes in 1809:

but it is equally true, that wanting all the cement of thought as well as of style, all the connections, and (if you will forgive so trivial ^Ametaphor) all the *hooks-and-eyes* of the memory, they are easily forgotten: or rather, it is scarcely possible that they should be remembered....Like idle morning visitors, the brisk and breathless periods hurry in and hurry off in quick and profitless succession; each indeed for the moment of its stay prevents the pain of vacancy, while it indulges the love of sloth: but all together they leave the mistress of the house (the soul I mean) flat and exhausted, incapable of attending to her own concerns, and unfitted for the conversations of more rational guests.⁵¹

According to Coleridge, then, sentences unconnected by the 'cement of thought' are bad for the soul.

De Quincey, like Coleridge, believes that a good prose style must be distinguished by 'connectedness' or what he designates 'continuousness.' 'It is in the *relation* of sentences', De Quincey states,

...that the true life of composition resides. The mode of their *nexus*, the way in which one sentence is made to arise out of another, and to prepare the opening for a third: this is the great loom in which the textile process of the moving intellect reveals itself and prospers. Here the separate clauses of a period become architectural parts, aiding, relieving, supporting each other.⁵²

De Quincey's enthusiasm for 'continuous' prose leads him to criticise the 'discontinuous' prose of writers like Johnson, Lamb and Hazlitt. 'Hazlitt was not eloquent because he was discontinuous', De Quincey declares.

No man can be eloquent whose thoughts are abrupt, insulated, capricious, and...non-sequacious. Eloquence resides not in separate ideas, but in the relations of manifold ideas, and in the mode of their evolution from each other....The elements are nothing without the atmosphere that moulds, and the dynamic forces that combine. Now Hazlitt's brilliancy is seen chiefly in separate splinterings of phrase or image which throw upon the eye a vitreous scintillation for a moment, but spread no deep suffusion of colour, and distribute no masses of mighty shadow. A flash, a solitary flash, and all is gone.⁵³

De Quincey also criticises Southey's prose for its lack of continuity and 'the loftier qualities.' Yet in Southey's case he makes a concession. His prose is 'plain', De Quincey notes, but

good, because it has been suited to his themes; and those themes have hitherto been either narrative, which usually imposes a modest diction, and a modest structure of sentences, or argumentative in that class which is too overburdened with details, with replies, with interruptions, and every mode of discontinuity, to allow a thought of eloquence.⁵⁴

De Quincey is frequently critical of the 'discontinuous' mode but on occasion he accepts that for certain topics it is appropriate.

Yet because he considers the noble and the resonant well beyond its reach, the 'discontinuous' is always for De Quincey a weaker and less substantial form of prose expression. Only people of a 'narrow sensibility', he contends, '...imagine that a simple (that is, according to many tastes, an unelevated and *unrhythmical*) style - take, for instance, an Addisonian or a Swiftian style - is *unconditionally* good.'

Not so: all depends upon the subject; and there is a style transcending these and all other modes of simplicity by infinite degrees, and in the same proportion impossible to most men: the rhythmical - the continuous - what in French is called the *soutenu*; which to humbler styles stands in the relation of an organ to a shepherd's pipe. This also finds its justification in its subject; and the subject which *can* justify it must be of a corresponding quality - loftier, and, therefore, rare.⁵⁵

Thus, avers De Quincey, 'were a magnificent dedication required, moving with a stately and measured solemnity....Southey's is not the mind, and, by a necessary consequence, Southey's is not the style, for carrying such purposes into full and memorable effect.'⁵⁶ Similarly, De Quincey puts the following case to Lamb:

If, as a musician, as the leader of a mighty orchestra, you had this theme offered to you - "Belshazzar the King gave a great feast to a thousand of his lords" - or

this, "And, on a certain day, Marcus Cicero stood up, and in a set speech rendered solemn thanks to Caisar for Quintus Ligarius pardoned, and for Marcus Marcellus restored" - surely no man would deny that, in such a case, simplicity, though in a passive sense not lawfully absent, must stand aside as totally insufficient for the *positive* part.

De Quincey adds that 'simplicity might guide even here, but could not furnish the power.'⁵⁷ This is the key point. Plainness and discontinuity, to De Quincey's mind, cannot result in power. Power is produced by elaboration, expansion, the ebb and flow of sound and rhythm over a continuous series of complex sentences. The plain style's lack of scope and sophistication render it incapable of the highest effects.

On this point De Quincey is, of course, wrong. The prose of writers like Hazlitt, Southey and Lamb is not as disjointed or fragmented as he implies. Further, as many different passages from their respective writings evince, it is perfectly possible to write comprehensive and powerful prose on noble subjects in the familiar style. There is more volume in De Quincey, more display, and a more conscious attempt to create an effect. But the plainness and simplicity of Hazlitt and Lamb equals in power anything of De Quincey.

De Quincey's unfair denigration of the familiar style is partially rectified by his recognition of the faults of the continuous style. He admits that continuousness often leads to affectation or what 'in popular criticism...is expressed by the term "flowery", meaning excess of figurativeness sought for its own sake.' 'In some writers', he declares, 'celebrated for the brilliancy of their embellishments...figure, metaphors, &c. appear to have been laid on separately, and artificially, as so much embroidery.' Elsewhere De Quincey criticises that prose style 'in which twenty or thirty words are used to express what might

be as well or better given in five or ten.' On one occasion he goes so far as to condemn the whole idea of 'rhetoric', claiming that 'according to its quality', it 'stands in many degrees of relation to the permanencies of truth; and all rhetoric, like all flesh, is partly unreal, and the glory of both is fleeting.' De Quincey insists, too, that style should never be allowed to eclipse subject matter: 'One law of good sense is paramount for all composition whatsoever', he asserts,

viz., that the subject, the very ideas, for the development of which only any composition at all became necessary, must not suffer prejudice, or diminution, from any scruples affecting the mere accessories of style or manner. Where both cannot co-exist, perish the style - let the subject-matter... prosper!⁵⁸

De Quincey draws a sharp line, however, between a continuous style of affectation and verbosity, and a continuous style in which the embellishments, the imagery and the intricacy of the prose form the mechanism by and through which a thought is evolved. He remarks that 'to poor understandings, caught only by the surface^f of things, no two writers that have ever existed, are more liable to this stigma of floweriness, than Jeremy Taylor and Edmund Burke; whilst, in fact, none are less so.' For in Taylor and Burke, De Quincey writes,

every thing figurative is part and parcel of the process of thinking, and incarnated with the thought; it is not a separable descant *on* what they think, but a part of the organ *by* which they think, - for we will take upon us to affirm, that no passage can be produced from either of them, in which the imagery does no more than repeat and reflect the naked unillustrated thought, but that always there is some latent feature, or relation of the truth revealed by the imagery, which could not have been revealed without it.⁵⁹

In De Quincey's opinion, then, continuous prose often degenerates into a hubbub of words, words, words. But when handled properly, it is a vital and superior medium through which writers like Taylor and Burke may unfold the complexity of their thought.

De Quincey's continuous prose is sometimes convoluted, sometimes tumid, sometimes affected. But in general, his longest – even wordiest – sentences are easily understood, the product of an anxious but logical mind. De Quincey's prose is accessible because he prided himself on grammatical correctness and proper punctuation, and because he is highly methodical when explaining to the reader the intention or the ideas behind any given essay. De Quincey is also extremely eager to ingratiate himself with the reader so that while he may introduce complicated or tenuous arguments in long, winding sentences, his urbanity – his overriding desire to entertain and instruct – ensures that these winding sentences become part of a scholarly but engaging manner that provides information for the reader at the same time that it amuses him. De Quincey's fashions a continuous prose that often highlights his intellectualism but he never loses sight of the fact that his primary goal is to please his audience, not to puzzle or punish it. Finally, De Quincey's prose is not justly chargeable with affectation because, like the prose of Taylor and Burke, its intricacies, bravuras and elaborate asides are the means through which the grandeur of his thought slowly evolves. Rarely is De Quincey gratuitously ornamental: when his prose becomes complex and splendid it is because he is labouring to incarnate a view of the world that is similarly complex and splendid.

Perhaps the most obvious feature of De Quincey's continuous prose is its malleability: a remarkable command over the resources of

language – its rhythms, meanings, colours and harmonies – enables De Quincey, with the same sinuous style, to write effectively in such widely different areas as history, economics, fiction, biography, translation and literary criticism. And in each of these areas De Quincey is capable of making his prose, by turns, vulgar, stately, facetious, arrogant, whimsical, pious and much else; of assimilating any mood, any thought, any direction to this supple medium. There are many prose writers whose style is immediately recognisable – Browne, Hazlitt, Carlyle and Ruskin – and in De Quincey's prose, beneath all the diversity, his busy, nervous voice is recognisable time and again. But De Quincey's prose, for all its distinctiveness, has a range and an agility that is perhaps greater than the range or the agility of any other English prose writer. De Quincey was not a man of original thought; he is frequently limited by his Christian, English and Tory prejudices; and he borrowed extensively from the works of contemporaries like Wordsworth and Coleridge. But as a craftsman, a prose stylist, as someone able to exploit and channel the various richnesses of language for highly diversified ends, De Quincey stands without rival.

To many Victorian critics De Quincey was 'essentially a humorist': in 1852 the *New Monthly Magazine* described him as 'one of the wittiest of humorists and most humorous of wits.' Others thought of De Quincey as an intellectual: when he died the *Quarterly Review* praised his 'powers of reasoning' and called him 'a great master of English composition, a critic of uncommon delicacy, an honest and unflinching investigator of received opinions, a philosophic inquirer.' For its part, the *New York Weekly Times* extolled De Quincey's elaborate style in the dream sequences, informing its readers, 'you shall hear words now of deepest import, and the language shall search your soul for echoes...and you shall feel something within you that was

ne'er revealed to consciousness before.' More recently, Thomas McFarland has concluded of De Quincey's diversity,

It is difficult to think of another figure with so varied a stylistic repertoire as De Quincey. The style he uses in his startling piece on "Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts" is taut, reportorial, and suspenseful, a world removed from the caduceus style [of *Suspiria*]. The style he uses in his *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets* is conversational, anecdotal, frequently humorous.⁶⁰

Confessions of an English Opium-Eater is one of the finest examples of De Quincey's range as a prose stylist. The work contains a number of striking episodes and a number of strikingly different moods, and De Quincey's continuous prose successfully incarnates the whole of this variety. Critics frequently see the *Confessions* as existing in two parts – the narrative and the dream sequence – though they differ widely in their assessment of the merits of these two parts. Jonathan Wordsworth, for example, writes that 'the *Confessions* move from autobiography – fictionalised no doubt, but still largely mundane – into the recreation of dream.' Laurence Stapleton, on the other hand, argues that 'the facts, given to us in the narrative are deeply moving; the dream echo lapses into the weakness of sentiment.'⁶¹ Both these assertions are unproductive, initially because they belie the variety within each of the two parts. The De Quincey of the narrative reminisces about his student days at Oxford, preaches on the bodily effects of drug dependency, mourns the loss of Ann, laughs about a runaway trunk and calculates his daily opium dosage. The De Quincey of the finale cries at the sight of his children, panics as a day of eclipse approaches, gazes peacefully at a Lakeland scene, marvels at the splendour of his architectural dreams and trembles at the abominable

crocodile. The division of the *Confessions* into two main parts is a useful way of examining the structure of the work. But such a division obscures the exceptional diversity of the piece as a whole.

Moreover, though the narrative and the dream sequence are both based on key episodes like Ann of Oxford Street and the bolt from Manchester Grammar School, the two parts do not treat their shared material in anything like the same way. The narrative corresponds to De Quincey's conscious, selective *memory* of the past and is diffuse and multifarious, a winding and often pathetic memorial of the grave and the gay. The finale, on the other hand, records the demons that surge up from De Quincey's unconscious when he *dreams* about the past: it is grand, intense and ghastly, though not without moments of beauty and relief. The difference between the two parts is best illustrated by De Quincey's treatment of Ann. In the narrative her memory is handled with tenderness and remorse as De Quincey details the circumstances surrounding their relationship. In the finale Ann gradually appears as the central figure in a dream that unites Biblical and Lakeland scenery with overt references to the death of Catherine Wordsworth. De Quincey's treatment of Ann in the dream sequence is hallowed, condensed, transmutative. In the narrative, then, Ann is presented through a series of selected memories; in the finale, she rises as a dream-vision from the unconscious mind. The two parts are not in competition with one another, as Wordsworth and Stapleton seem to imply. Ann is not handled well in one part and badly in the other. Rather, there are two different Anns – the memory of Ann and the visionary Ann – and De Quincey writes two different parts to deal with two different figures. More to the point, his prose successfully captures these two different figures, as it does the numerous acute shifts in tone and direction that occur throughout the work. The

Confessions are one of the best examples of De Quincey's extraordinary deftness as a prose stylist, a work in which a complex and varied series of autobiographical incidents are evolved in a pliant style that successfully rises and falls, marches and digresses, lightens and darkens in accordance with highly diverse thematic and structural demands.

The *Confessions*, however, are a rare exception in the De Quinceyan canon in that they successfully combine two kinds of 'continuousness': long, continuous sentences develop a meandering but continuous, autobiographical theme. It is one of the great paradoxes of De Quincey that in the vast majority of instances he is capable of only the former: he writes continuous sentences, sometimes continuous paragraphs, but hardly ever what might be called 'continuous' essays. De Quincey frequently begins with great gusto but then he wanders off, he breaks down and picks up again somewhere else, he nears a conclusion only to become flippant or dismissive, he scurries away because of a deadline or lack of information, he prances, he chides, he digresses, he prevaricates, he does almost everything but move boldly forward with his declared subject matter: his shapely, fluent sentences often embalmed an utter farrago of ideas. De Quincey, writes Virginia Woolf, was

the most careful of artists. Nobody tunes the sound and modulates the cadence of a sentence more carefully and more exquisitely. But strangely enough, the sensibility which was on the alert to warn him instantly if a sound clashed or a rhythm flagged failed him completely when it came to the architecture of the whole. Then he could tolerate a disproportion and profusion that make his book as dropsical and shapeless as each sentence is symmetrical and smooth.⁶²

Hazlitt, one might add, compares interestingly with De Quincey in this context. Crudely put, Hazlitt's terse, plain and what De Quincey labelled 'discontinuous' sentences invariably express lucid, sustained opinions: Hazlitt writes 'continuous' essays with 'discontinuous' prose. De Quincey, on the other hand, crafts embellished, smooth sentences to record a series of often fragmented or ill-developed ideas: he writes discontinuous essays in a continuous prose.

De Quincey's discontinuousness, however, is not as serious a 'fault' as numerous critics have made it out to be. Edmund Baxter has recently pointed out that 'the definition of De Quincey as a "flawed" writer' has been 'perhaps the greatest obstacle to a thorough critical appraisal of his writings' and adds that, while 'it would be futile to deny that De Quincey's writing is often tedious and digressive....this is not a "fault" (and it might even be the opposite).'⁶³ In fact, for contemporary audiences, De Quincey's so-called 'faults' were more likely to be perceived as the characteristic devices of a talented magazine writer working diligently to entertain his readership. Today, De Quincey's 'faults' - what Sackville West once characterised as the 'bad fairies' of 'Pedantry, Digression, Prolivity and Facetiousness'⁶⁴ - are undoubtedly tiresome but even in his most tiresome passages De Quincey often packs revealing detail and poignant insight. As a writer De Quincey does not move in a straight line; he has none of Hazlitt's 'attack.' His stylistic method is all swirl and delay. De Quincey explores shades, implications, paradox, for he sees nothing in black and white. There are few bold assertions that come without caveats and equivocation. And what he declares he is *going* to write about is not always what he *does* write about.

Yet De Quincey's dalliances and his spurious declarations of subject matter should not blind us to the merits of what he does in fact

produce: we would do better to examine what De Quincey's essays actually contain rather than lament that they do not contain what he promised they would. After all, in the opening paragraph of the *Confessions* De Quincey states that 'the greater part' of the work will 'proceed from demireps, adventurers, or swindlers'⁶⁵ and yet we do not call the *Confessions* 'flawed' because it has so little to do with demireps, adventurers, or swindlers. De Quincey's prose is fitful and circuitous but on several occasions this allows for a unique exploration of a subject's subtleties and oddities. 'Time', he stresses in his essay on 'Style',

Time must be given for the intellect to eddy about a truth, and to appropriate its bearings. There is a sort of previous lubrication, such as the boa-constrictor applies to any subject of digestion, which is requisite to familiarise the mind with a startling or a complex novelty. And this is obtained for the intellect by varying the modes of presenting it, - now putting it directly before the eye, now obliquely, now in an abstract shape, now in the concrete; all which, being the proper technical discipline for dealing with such cases, ought no longer to be viewed as a licentious mode of style, but as the just style in respect of those licentious circumstances.⁶⁶

This is not a logical sleight of hand in order to justify his own style. De Quincey simply wants to emphasize that in his view complex subject matter demands a complex style. We do not complain 'of a prophet', he notes, 'for being a little darker of speech than a post-office directory.'⁶⁷

De Quincey's essays on Coleridge are particularly good examples of how this eddying, appropriating style can be made to produce a revealing portrait. De Quincey's attitude toward Coleridge is often ill-natured but he had a genuine knowledge of Coleridge's psychological

and intellectual make-up, likely because it so resembled his own. De Quincey's essays on Coleridge, especially those written for *Tait's* just after Coleridge's death in 1834, are digressive, repetitive and contradictory. 'My purpose is merely to supply a few hints and suggestions drawn from a very hasty retrospect'⁶⁸, De Quincey announces at one point. And yet as these four articles progress – and De Quincey continues to play over his subject matter – the depth and full complexity of Coleridge's intellect begins to assert itself. De Quincey's characterisation of the Coleridgean monologue, for example, is the most vivid and perceptive record we have of what it was like to sit and listen to the finest talker of the nineteenth century. De Quincey is in Coleridge's company for the first time and, after settling some 'little points of business', Coleridge launches into discourse. 'Coleridge', De Quincey avers,

like some great river, the Orellana, or the St. Lawrence, that had been checked and fretted by rocks or thwarting islands, and suddenly recovers its volume of waters, and its mighty music, – swept at once, as if returning to his natural business, into a continuous strain of eloquent dissertation, certainly the most novel, the most finely illustrated, and traversing the most spacious fields of thought, by transitions the most just and logical, that it was possible to conceive....Coleridge, to many people, and often I have heard the complaint, seemed to wander; and he seemed then to wander the most, when in fact his resistance to the wandering instinct was greatest, – viz. when the compass, and huge circuit, by which his illustrations moved, travelled farthest into remote regions, before they began to revolve. Long before this coming-round commenced, most people had lost him, and naturally enough supposed that he had lost himself. They continued to admire the separate beauty of the thoughts, but did not see their relations to the dominant theme....However, I can assert, upon my long and intimate knowledge of

Coleridge's mind, that logic, the most severe, was as inalienable from his modes of thinking, as grammar from his language.⁶⁹

Coleridge's daughter Sara, who thought De Quincey's *Tait's* articles 'infamous', nevertheless agreed that De Quincey had an 'intimate knowledge' of her father's mind. Indeed she asserts that

Of all the censors of Mr. Coleridge, Mr. De Quincey is the one whose remarks are the most worthy of attention; those of the rest in general are but views taken from a distance, and filled up by conjecture, views taken through a medium, so thick with *opinion*, even if not clouded with vanity and self-love, that it resembles a horn more than glass or the transparent air. The Opium-Eater, as he has called himself, had sufficient inward sympathy with the subject of his criticism to be capable in some degree of beholding his mind, as it actually existed, in all the intermingling shades of individual reality; and in few minds have these shades been more subtly intermingled than in my father's.⁷⁰

Hazlitt's portrait of Coleridge in *The Spirit of the Age* is shorter, better organized and more assertive than De Quincey's efforts in *Tait's*. Yet the spirit of Coleridge is better realized in De Quincey's essays because De Quincey's prose style relies, not on plainness and declaration, but on digression, bravura and dalliance and such a style, for all its distractions, is better suited to delineate and embody the 'subtly intermingled' shades of a subject like the genius of Coleridge.

De Quincey's so-called 'impassioned prose' is a heightening and embellishing of his customary continuous style. Yet as a term it is strikingly inappropriate to describe the kind of prose he intends it to. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'impassioned' as 'filled or inflamed with passion; having the feelings deeply moved or excited; passionate, ardent.'⁷¹ De Quincey's 'impassioned prose' does often

leave 'the feelings deeply moved' but it is too stylised, too consciously artificial, to be 'passionate.' De Quincey himself adds further to the confusion because he never offers an explicit definition of the term and because he often praises 'rapid and extemporare [sic] prose as 'impassioned.' 'Extemporaneousness' is 'a favourable circumstances to impassioned eloquence', he declares. Or he asserts that when a writer is forced to compose against time this often has 'the effect of suddenly unlocking cells in the brain, and revealing evanescent gleams of original feeling, or startling suggestions of novel truth, that would not have obeyed a less fervent magnetism.' De Quincey likens extemporary composition to 'musical improvisations...on the organ' and asserts that 'all great' organists 'have had reason to bemoan their inability to arrest those sudden felicities and impassioned combinations...which the magnetic inspiration of the moment has availed to excite.'⁷²

De Quincey's enthusiasm for these 'impassioned combinations', however, is tempered in most instances with a recognition of the benefits bestowed upon writing by a methodology and a sufficient time allowance. Extemporaneous writing appeals to 'the instant sensibilities', he realizes, but 'there are evils more than compensatory as regards the understanding.' When a writer is rushed, De Quincey notes,

there can...be no looking back so as to adjust the latter sweep of the curve to the former; there can be no looking forward, so as to lay a slow foundation for remote superstructures. There can be no painful evolution of principles; there can be no elaborate analysis; there can be no subtle pursuit of distinction.⁷³

On other occasions De Quincey is more forthright about the need for ample time in order to compose properly. 'I have never been able to write fast, and am now less able than ever', he tells Francis Jacox in

1858. Elsewhere he declares, 'It is the most profound insult, the idea one can write something rapidly. It is no homage to the writer; it is villainous insensibility to the written.'⁷⁴ De Quincey, then, praises what he sees as the felicities wrought by extemporary composition and perhaps, on occasion, his writing derives some benefit from such spontaneity. But rarely does De Quincey's prose become 'inflamed with passion' in anything like the customary sense. Indeed, abundant manuscript material, De Quincey's own testimony and the characteristic sophistication of his prose indicate that, regardless of subject matter, he habitually composed slowly and by 'painful evolution.'

Yet for all the self-inflicted confusion surrounding the term, what De Quincey actually means when he speaks of 'impassioned prose' is made clear enough when he refers to '*The Confessions of an Opium-Eater*, and also (but more emphatically) the *Suspiria de Profundis*...as modes of impassioned prose' and then desires to 'remind the reader of the perilous difficulty besieging all attempts to clothe in words the visionary scenes derived from the world of dreams, where a single false note, a single word in a wrong key, ruins the whole music.'⁷⁵ 'Impassioned prose', for De Quincey, means a language highly resonant, intricate and embellished. Jordan declares that De Quincey's 'impressive periods' were constructed 'by a painstaking mastery of assonance, alliteration, balance, swelling and falling rhythms, and haunting and evocative diction.' Lindop concludes that

the rhetorical elaboration of De Quincey's work stems not from a self-indulgent love of florid ornateness, but from a desire to develop the full poetic resources of prose discourse, enabling it to refract and focus the many colours of experience as they enter a particularly rich and subtle consciousness.⁷⁶

De Quincey claims, rather curiously, that his 'impassioned prose' ranges 'under no precedents that I am aware of in any literature' and he insists that the reader 'consider the utter sterility of universal literature in this one department of impassioned prose.'⁷⁷ But as we have seen, and as many commentators have rightly pointed out, the heightened passages of Taylor and others establish a clear precedent for 'impassioned prose.'⁷⁸ And yet, in two different ways, De Quincey does have some grounds for his claim. First, though his exalted moments parallel Browne's, Taylor's and Burke's in their intricacy and intensity, De Quincey's passages have none of the fury of Burke's nor do they speak eloquently through metaphor like Taylor's. De Quincey's heightened scenes most closely resemble those of Browne. Yet even here there is a sharp difference, not strictly of kind but of degree. The tone, the rhythms and the vocabulary of De Quincey and Browne are often similar but De Quincey is characteristically more expansive than Browne, he reaches a richer level than Browne and he is more intent than Browne on plumbing and exploiting the emotional depths of any given moment. In *Urne-Buriall*, for example, Browne descants on bones that have been unearthed after being buried in urns for centuries. He writes:

Now since these dead bones have already out-last-
ed the living ones of *Methuselah*, and in a yard under
ground, and thin walls of clay, out-worn all the strong
and specious buildings above it; and quietly rested
under the drums and tramlings of three conquests.⁷⁹

De Quincey was enraptured by this passage. 'What a melodious ascent', he avers,

as of a prelude to some impassioned requiem
breathing from the poms of earth, and from the
sanctities of the grave! What a *fluctus decumanus* of

rhetoric! Time expounded, not by generations or centuries, but by the vast periods of conquests and dynasties; by cycles of Pharaohs and Ptolemies, Antiochi and Arsacides! And these vast successions of time distinguished and figured by the uproars which revolve at their inaugurations; by the drums and tramlings rolling overhead upon the chambers of forgotten dead – the trepidations of time and mortality vexing, at secular intervals, the everlasting sabbaths of the grave!⁸⁰

Both De Quincey and Browne are clearly affected by the thought of these bones being buried for such a vast length of time. And though Browne is writing in praise of the bones and De Quincey is writing in praise of Browne, the atmosphere, the language and the subject matter of the two passages is largely the same. Yet the way in which De Quincey plays with the idea of the buried bones – unravels its import, pushes its implications, develops its resonances – is typical of his impassioned manner. His heightened moments are markedly different from Taylor's and Burke's while his stylistic bravado produces a prose involuted and more elaborate than anything in Browne.

As to those writers of impassioned prose that follow De Quincey, there are really only two – Ruskin and Pater. Ruskin is the only nineteenth-century writer who produces impassioned prose as frequently as De Quincey, though Ruskin breaks from the style in later life. Ruskin wrote in many different areas – economics, art, science and literature – and though his style is always capable of passing into the orotund, it is in his descriptions of architecture that he ascends to his highest and most sustained moments of splendour. In *The Stones of Venice*, for example, Ruskin moves impatiently through narrow lanes toward St. Mark's Cathedral, past lazy tourists and refurbished shop-fronts. And then, finally, the building comes into sight and all distractions are forgotten; 'for', he begins,

between those pillars there opens a great light, and, in the midst of it, as we advance slowly, the vast tower of St. Mark seems to lift itself visibly forth from the level field of chequered stones; and, on each side, the countless arches prolong themselves into ranged symmetry, as if the rugged and irregular houses that pressed together above us in the dark alley had been struck back into sudden obedience and lovely order, and all their rude casements and broken walls had been transformed into arches charged with goodly sculpture, and fluted shafts of delicate stone.

And well may they fall back for beyond those troops of ordered arches there rises a vision out of the earth, and all the great square seems to have opened from it in a kind of awe, that we may see it far away; - a multitude of pillars and white domes, clustered into a long low pyramid of coloured light; a treasure-heap, it seems, partly of gold, and partly of opal and mother-of-pearl, hollowed beneath into five great vaulted porches, ceiled with fair mosaic, and beset with sculpture of alabaster, clear as amber and delicate as ivory, - sculpture fantastic and involved, of palm leaves and lilies, and grapes and pomegranates, and birds clinging and fluttering among the branches, all twined together into an endless network of buds and plumes; and in the midst of it, the solemn forms of angels, sceptred, and robed to the feet, and leaning to each other across the gates, their figures indistinct among the gleaming of the golden ground through the leaves beside them, interrupted and dim, like the morning light as it faded back among the branches of Eden, when first its gates were angel-guarded long ago.⁸¹

As for Pater, he laboured hard at his prose, always seeking beauty and precision of phrase. Virginia Woolf declares that 'to read a page of De Quincey beside a page of Walter Pater or of Stevenson is like picking out of the waste-paper basket [sic] some rapid, exuberant sketch which either of these writers might have made in order to get their ecstasies disposed of before setting to work in earnest.'⁸² Pater's prose

customarily holds to a middle ground, winding evenly and intently round its subject matter. On at least one occasion, however, Pater leaves the middle ground for a prose of exceptional complexity and evocativeness. Pater is overwhelmed by the mystery of da Vinci's 'Mona Lisa.' 'Hers is the head upon which all "the ends of the world are come"', he writes,

and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed! All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands.⁸³

The impassioned prose of De Quincey, Ruskin and Pater shares the floridness, artificiality and resonance characteristic of the medium. What is more, De Quincey's record in *Confessions* of 'vast Gothic halls' and those 'dreams...chiefly architectural' in which he 'beheld such pomp of cities and palaces as was never yet beheld by the waking eye' is a forerunner of Ruskin's description of St. Mark. De Quincey's account in

Suspiria of the face of the woman 'that beckoneth and warneth' him 'and in whose eyes is woeful remembrance'⁸⁴ prefigures Pater's rendering of the 'Mona Lisa.'

Yet there are keen differences between the impassioned prose of De Quincey and that of the two writers that follow him. Ruskin's heightened passages are characteristically longer, better organized and more concerned with detail than De Quincey's. Pater differs from both De Quincey and Ruskin in that he resorts to the impassioned medium only rarely and when he does, as in the case of the 'Mona Lisa', he is steadier, less exuberant and more finely wrought than the other two. But the most fundamental difference between the impassioned prose of these three writers is that while De Quincey is concerned with the internal, Ruskin and Pater are concerned with the external. Indeed, the second reason De Quincey can justly claim that his impassioned prose has 'no precedents' - and, one might add, no descendants - is because while Browne concentrates on immortality, time and change, Taylor on the instruments and efficacy of Christianity, Burke on tyranny and arbitrary power, Ruskin on splendid architecture and Pater on the haunting enigmas of a single face, only De Quincey uses the impassioned manner primarily to explore the depth and resources of the human heart. All six writers produce 'power' with their impassioned prose but for Browne, Taylor, Burke, Ruskin and Pater, it explores what is without: it forces us to reflect on the world around us, it rouses our emotions against injustice, it opens our eyes to beauties not previously seen. For De Quincey alone, impassioned prose explores what is within, incarnating those critical scenes when there is 'nothing on the stage but a solitary infant, and its solitary combat with grief' or those 'dark reflections from eternities below all life' when they are thrown 'upon the mirrors of the sleeping mind.'⁸⁵

De Quincey's impassioned prose has, of course, long been criticised for being unnatural and over-elaborate. Masson objects that some parts of De Quincey's 'dream-phantasies...fail by too much obtrusion of artistic self-consciousness in their construction, and sometimes also by a swooning of the power of clear and consecutive vision in a mere piling and excess of imagery and sound.' George Sampson states flatly: 'If...we are reminded that some of De Quincey's prose is almost poetry, we are bound to reply, so much the worse for his prose. That which is near-poetry, or not-quite poetry, is simply poor poetry; it is certainly not good prose.'⁸⁶ Recently, in their *Words About Music*, John Amis and Michael Rose single out for consideration the following passage from 'The Dream Fugue':

Then was completed the passion of the mighty fugue.
The golden tubes of the organ, which as yet had but
muttered at intervals - gleaming amongst clouds and
surges of incense - threw up, as from fountains
unfathomable, columns of heart-shattering music.
Choir and anti-choir were filling fast with unknown
voices. Thou also, Dying Trumpeter, - with thy love
that was victorious, and thy anguish that was
finishing - didst enter the tumult; trumpet and echo -
farewell love, and farewell anguish - rang through the
dreadful *sanctus*. Oh, darkness of the grave! that
from the crimson altar and from the fiery font wert
visited and searched by the effulgence in the angel's
eye - were these indeed thy children? Pumps of life,
that from the burials of centuries, rose again to the
voice of perfect joy, did ye indeed mingle with the
festivals of Death? Lo! as I looked back for seventy
leagues through the mighty cathedral, I saw the quick
and the dead that sang together to God, together that
sang to the generations of man. All the hosts of
jubilation, like armies that ride in pursuit, moved
with one step. Us, that, with laurelled heads, were
passing from the cathedral, they overtook, and, as
with a garment, they wrapped us round with thunders
greater than our own.

Amis and Rose conclude of this passage: 'It is a celebrated piece of fine writing, but are we alone in being nagged by irrepressible memories of, well, Walt Disney and *Fantasia*?'⁸⁷

To a considerable degree impassioned prose is a matter of literary taste and there is little point in disputing the issue. But if the impassioned medium is rejected because of preconceived notions about the nature of prose or the dividing line between different literary genres then room is left for debate. The legitimacy of any literary art form must be its ability to accurately render thoughts in words and impassioned prose is a viable literary medium because it has had a series of practitioners who have successfully enshrined grand thoughts in grand words, who have consciously infused their prose with metre, harmony and rhythm in order to capture the convolutions and evocativeness of their profoundest ideas. As a means by which to render everything from a meditation on death to the intricate beauty of a facade impassioned prose is an admirable, indeed an essential medium.

In De Quincey's work impassioned prose is of paramount importance because it enables him to give voice to the sublime; and 'the sublime is for De Quincey', as Proctor has said, 'the primary aesthetic effect in literature.'⁸⁸ As a literary concept, the sublime was enormously influential in Britain throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century. Most of the speculation on the subject took as its starting point Longinus's *On the Sublime*, an ancient treatise concerned essentially with detailing 'the various means of giving...nobility and loftiness' to poetry and prose. But in *On The Sublime* Longinus also touches on a series of ideas central to later and more aesthetically orientated conceptions of the term: that, for example, 'the Sublime' acts 'with an imperious and irresistible force', that two of its most

important sources are 'grandeur of thought' and 'a vigorous and spirited treatment of the passions', that 'the most homely language is sometimes far more vivid than the most ornamental', that "'brave disorder"...is natural to an exalted genius' and that there is 'implanted in our souls an invincible yearning for all that is great, all that is diviner than ourselves.'⁸⁹ These six postulates, in their concern with 'force', "'disorder'", 'passions' and moral 'yearning', form the basis for almost all future speculation on the sublime, though it soon became clear that they could be combined or interpreted to support strikingly diverse critical positions.

Boileau's 1674 'Preface' to his translation of *On The Sublime* initiated extended discussion of the term. Boileau asserts that by the sublime Longinus means 'the extraordinary, the surprising, and...the marvellous in discourse'⁹⁰ - whatever empowers a work to transport, overwhelm and elevate. He argues that the sublime style demands grand diction but that the sublime itself is capable of existing in a single image or a single thought. Joseph Addison, in his 1712 series of papers on 'The Pleasures of the Imagination', draws on the Longinian idea of 'an invincible yearning for all that is great' when he posits that to gaze upon scenes of massiveness or vastness produces aesthetic pleasure because

our Imagination loves to be filled with an Object, or to grasp at any thing that is too big for its Capacity. We are flung into a pleasing Astonishment at such unbounded Views, and feel a delightful Stillness and Amazement in the Soul at the Apprehension of them.⁹¹

Later commentators like Isaac Hawkins Browne and Lord Kames used Longinus's treatise, particularly the assertion that 'homely language is sometimes far more vivid than the most ornamental', to reinforce

neoclassical ideas about simplicity, directness and proportion. The true sublime, says Kames, 'circumscribed within proper bounds...enchants the mind and raises the most delightful of all emotions.' Other critics, such as Hugh Blair and James Beattie, agreed with Kames that the sublime is best expressed in simple language, but then used the emotionalism and disorderliness sanctioned by the term to subvert Augustan ideals about the nature of art. Blair believes that 'when the thought is truly noble, it will for the most part, clothe itself in a native dignity of language' but, in sharp contrast to Kames, he insists that 'nothing is more sublime than mighty power and strength.' Joseph Priestley applied David Hartley's psychology of associationism in an attempt to understand the effects of the sublime. John Baillie saw the sublime as a vastness that filled the mind to the exclusion of emotion and all else, thus producing a mental state of absolute tranquillity.⁹² The central tract in all this speculation, however, is Burke's 1757 *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. This tract is the first extended attempt to systematically analyze the psychological principles that lie behind an experience of the sublime. Burke believes that sublimity depends to some extent on properties residing in an object but he makes the emotional response created by this object the cornerstone of his theory. 'Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger', he declares,

that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.⁹³

In addition to terror, Burke lists obscurity, privation, vastness and infinity as the most powerful 'causes' of the sublime, and examines in detail the different forms and effects of each of these 'causes.' Many in the eighteenth century speculated on sublimity but Burke's *Enquiry* was the first comprehensive and empirical investigation of the concept.

The *Enquiry* was enormously influential. By making terror such a central feature of his aesthetic system Burke established a theoretical basis for the 'graveyard' poetry of Robert Blair, Edward Young, Thomas Gray and others, the Ossianic verse of James Macpherson and the Gothic fiction of Walpole and his many successors. Burke's treatise also stands behind the more sophisticated handling of silence, darkness, fear, stupendous sceneries, dreadful violence, feverish emotion and mysterious castles that pervade the work of later figures like Coleridge, Shelley, Scott and Byron. Finally, much of the subsequent speculation on the sublime, from Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* to Wordsworth's 'On the Sublime' to Lessing's *Laocoon*, is indebted to Burke's treatise.

By the middle decades of the nineteenth century, however, the idea of sublimity had faded before a new tough-minded concern with reality. The dark and the colossal had become far less important than the clear-headed and the factual. Charlotte Bronte sums up this shift in attitude when, in the second paragraph of her 1849 novel *Shirley*, she asserts,

If you think from this prelude, that anything like a romance is preparing for you, reader, you never were more mistaken. Do you anticipate sentiment, and poetry, and reverie? Do you expect passion, and stimulus, and melodrama? Calm your expectations; reduce them to a lowly standard. Something real, cool, and solid lies before you; something unromantic

as Monday morning, when all who have work wake with the consciousness that they must rise and betake themselves thereto.⁹⁴

After decades of popularity and influence, the Burkean sublime was eclipsed by an intense concern with 'something unromantic as Monday morning.'

De Quincey's writing career commenced when interest in the sublime first began to wane and it ended when the idea had almost disappeared. None of this bothered him. He was enthralled by the concept of sublimity as early as his 1803 *Diary*⁹⁵ and over nearly fifty years this fascination never left him. In 'A Brief Appraisal of the Greek Literature' De Quincey rightly stresses that Longinus's *On The Sublime* is essentially a treatise of rhetoric. 'Emphasis, or what in an artist's sense gives *relief* to a passage, causing it to stand forward and in advance of what surrounds it - *that* is the predominating idea of the "sublime" of Longinus.'⁹⁶ But De Quincey is on less stable ground when he denies that Longinus has had any influence on the evolution in England of the sublime as a literary concept and his ground becomes even shakier when he goes on to explain how *he* believes the concept developed in England. 'The idea of the Sublime', he states,

as defined, circumscribed, and circumstantiated, in English literature - an idea altogether of English growth - the *Sublime by way of polar antithesis to the Beautiful*, had no existence amongst ancient critics; consequently it could have no expression. It is a great thought, a true thought, a demonstrable thought, that the Sublime, as thus ascertained, and in contraposition to the Beautiful, grew up on the basis of *sexual* distinctions, - the Sublime corresponding to the male, and the Beautiful, its anti-pole, corresponding to the female. Behold! we show you a mystery!⁹⁷

But De Quincey shows us no mystery here, for this explanation of the development of the sublime in England plainly owes less to a notion of 'sexual' distinctions' than it does to De Quincey's own Christian prejudices. De Quincey defines the sublime as an 'idea...in which the notion of height is united with the notion of moral grandeur.' Such a definition is clearly akin to Longinus's assertion that there is 'implanted in our souls an invincible yearning for all that is great, all that is diviner than ourselves.' But De Quincey refuses to acknowledge even the possibility of a moral sense in a 'Pagan' critic like Longinus. Thus he produces a theory in which the 'English' and ancient notions of the term stand distinct. In truth, however, De Quincey's conception of the sublime is founded on morality, fear, awe and rapture, all of which are present but undeveloped in Longinus's tract.

Many of De Quincey's contemporaries took external nature as their primary source of ideas about the sublime. De Quincey, however, did not. Most would have agreed with Coleridge that

the sense of sublimity arises, not from the sight of an outward object, but from the reflection upon it: not from the impression, but from the idea. Few have seen a celebrated waterfall without feeling something of disappointment: it is only subsequently, by reflection, that the idea of the waterfall comes full into the mind, and brings with it a train of sublime associations.⁹⁸

De Quincey went along with contemporary trends in that he often claimed that 'outward object[s]' like the mountains of the Lake District engendered within him 'the sense of sublimity.' In 1803 he tells Wordsworth, 'My life has been passed...altogether in the worship of nature.' Over three decades later he informs his *Tait's* readership, 'from my earliest days, it was not extravagant to say that I had

hungered and thirsted' after mountains. In 'Memorials of Grasmere', De Quincey discourses on 'the sublimity' of the Easedale valley's 'mountain barriers' and in his 'Sketch of Professor Wilson' he enthuses over the view from Wilson's cottage above Windermere: 'I cannot recollect any spectacle in England or Wales', he writes,

of the many hundreds I have seen bearing a local, if not a national, reputation for magnificence of prospect, which so much dilates the heart with a sense of power and aerial sublimity as this terrace view from Elleray.⁹⁹

But for all his professed enthusiasm for the fells of Cumbria, De Quincey was not a child of nature. No rainbow ever made his heart leap up; no cataract ever haunted him like a passion; no landscape ever seemed to him to incarnate characters of the great apocalypse. In fact, perhaps more than any of his contemporaries De Quincey lived the life of the mind. His extreme shortsightedness once led him to admit that he was 'universally...a poor hand at observing'; and significantly, De Quincey believed it was his 'disease...to meditate too much and to observe too little.'¹⁰⁰ Thus, while he was sometimes awed by the mountains of the Lake District, it is revealing that he did the vast majority of his walking among them after it was dark and they could no longer be seen.¹⁰¹ Night attracted De Quincey more than day, and thoughts more than scenery. 'Mere scenery palls upon the mind where it is the sole and ever-present attraction relied on', De Quincey once said.¹⁰² Bookish, lucubratory and self-involved in the extreme, De Quincey's sense of the sublime is based primarily on the internal and the abstract. For him sublimity resides, not in the objects of the natural world, but in a series of ideas that haunt his imagination – the *idea*, for instances, of death, the *idea* of sin, of time, of war, of velocity, of childhood, of revenge, of opium. De Quincey is awed not by

the idea of a waterfall but by the idea of the conflicting impulses within the heart of the murderer: for within 'the murderer', he avers, '...there must be raging some great storm of passion, - jealousy, ambition, vengeance, hatred, - which create a hell within him; and into this hell we are to look.'¹⁰³

De Quincey as rhetorician is continually on the lookout for an opportunity to create the sublime. In his *Diary* he catalogues an entire series of incidents that he believes lend themselves to rhetorical effect, including '*A pathetic poem...describing the emotions of a man dying on a rock in the sea...within sight of his native cottage and his paternal hills*' and a novel in which the heroine dies on 'an island of a lake, her chamber-windows (opening on a lawn) set wide open - and the sweet blooming roses breathing y.^r odours on her dying senses.'¹⁰⁴ Years later, in one of the outlines for *Suspiria*, De Quincey lists several titles that promise impassioned treatment, among them 'The Dreadful Infant', 'God that didst Promise', 'That ran before us in Malice', 'Morning of Execution', 'The Halcyon Calm, and the Coffin' and 'Oh, sweep away, Angel, with Angelic Scorn, the Dogs that come with Curious Eyes to gaze.'¹⁰⁵ In the *Posthumous Works* 'two subjects of stories occur' to De Quincey, one for his 'Arabian tales', the other an account

of an abbess, who was such by dispensation, but had been married; her accomplished son succeeds in carrying off a nun. She labours for the discovery and punishment of the unknown criminal, till she learns who he is; then parting from him for ever in the early dawn, she, sacrificing to a love that for her was to produce only hatred and the total desolation of the total hopes of her ageing life. Splendide Mendax! and the more angel she.¹⁰⁶

None of these works was ever written but each shows De Quincey planning to draw upon favourite ideas like death, suffering and

childhood in order to create moments that will awe and impress the reader.

Many of De Quincey's published works feature the rhetorician extracting the sublime from the extremity of a single moment. In recreations of historical incident like 'Revolt of the Tartars', 'Russia as it was in the Summer and Winter of 1812' and 'Joan of Arc' De Quincey's narrative technique is often clumsy. But in each of these essays there are occasions when he maneuvers the different characters, settings and events of his narrative into a moment of crisis. Then, in haunting and distended prose, he exploits this crisis, highlighting its intricacy, stressing its antagonistic tensions, developing its significance. After all the resonances of the moment have been exhausted, De Quincey then returns to his narrative and begins anew the task of building toward a situation of extremity.

This same pattern of progression and crisis is evident in De Quincey's fictions, where his plots heave and creak until he has in place an instance of death, terror or devastation that the rhetorician is able to seize upon and embellish into the sublime. The narrative of 'The Spanish Military Nun', for example, is laboured and disorganised yet the 'dreadful spectacle' that greets the beleaguered Kate as she gains the summit of the Andes is one of De Quincey's most impressive moments. *Klosterheim* is memorable, not for its plot, characters or dialogue, but for those passages of impassioned effect in which the besieged travellers reach the gates of the city or the identity of the masque is finally revealed. Goldman points out that in *Walladmor*, 'as always, De Quincey has conceived his story not so much as a narrative of events, or a study of characters, but as a sequence of romantic tableaux, elaborately put together in the manner of theatrical scenery.'¹⁰⁷

The pattern of progression and crisis is also apparent in De Quincey's autobiographical writings. De Quincey sees much of his own experience in terms of the sublime: indeed, when he discusses the struggles and misfortunes of his own life, he habitually sets a far higher value on creating rhetorical effect than on trying to accurately render the truth. Thus his letters document an Iliad of woe in which he is constantly 'on the deck of a burning ship', at his 'last gasp' or working on an essay that is 'of all the tasks I ever had in my life...the most overwhelming.'¹⁰⁸ After reading one of her father's gloomy letters to William Tait, Florence De Quincey remarks wryly,

I have no need to look to dates to know that when he wrote that letter he was in the slough of despond; the whole tone reveals it even if I had forgotten the particular facts....Its main purpose is like the cuttle fish to throw ink in the eyes of the enemy, and himself, for the failure of some MSS. for the Maga.¹⁰⁹

De Quincey once told Wordsworth, 'I am sure it is not in my character to exaggerate.'¹¹⁰ But De Quincey repeatedly exaggerates for rhetorical effect, and particularly when describing his own experience.

Perhaps the most significant example of this tendency to exaggerate is that on different occasions De Quincey names four separate afflictions as the one great affliction of his life. In an 1806 letter to Wordsworth De Quincey describes the running away of his brother Pink in 1803 as 'my primal affliction through life'; but in both the 1821 and 1856 versions of *Confessions* De Quincey says the loss of Ann in 1802 'has been my heaviest affliction'; then, in 'Recollections of Grasmere' from 1839 De Quincey refers to Catherine Wordsworth's death in 1812 as 'the first deep draught from the cup of sorrow which it was destined that I should drink'; and finally, in the 'Introduction to the World of Strife' from 1851 De Quincey calls the tragic death of

Elizabeth in 1792 'the most memorable event of my life.'¹¹¹

According, then, to De Quincey's own testimony, the one great affliction of his life is the loss of Pink, then Ann, then Catherine, then Elizabeth and then Ann again.

There can be no doubt that De Quincey was genuinely grieved by the loss of Elizabeth, Ann and the others. Nevertheless, as in his histories and fictions, De Quincey in his autobiographical writings is primarily intent on guiding his narrative to a moment of crisis and then allowing the rhetorician to exploit that crisis. His concern is not with factual consistency but with emotional truth. His intention is to produce the sublime, to enshrine in impassioned prose the power he now sees inherent in past moments of grief and desolation. 'Nothing', he writes in 1850, 'makes such dreary and monotonous reading as the old hackneyed roll-call, chronologically arrayed, of inevitable facts in a man's life.'¹¹² De Quincey bases his autobiographical writings, not on 'inevitable facts', but on a reconstruction of past experience designed to awe and impress.

Perhaps the best example of how De Quincey as rhetorician likely went about transforming literal experience into impassioned utterance is a dream that appears in one of his chatty 1855 letters to his daughter Emily. The dream is long but it has received little critical attention and I quote it in full. 'I had a dream', De Quincey tells Emily, 'which dream was this.'

A door opened; it was a door on the *further* side of a spacious chamber. For a few moments I waited expectingly, but not knowing *what* to expect. At length a voice said audibly and most distinctly, but not loudly, *Florence and Emily*, with the tone of one announcing the arrival. Soon after, but not immediately, entered Florence, but to my astonishment, no Emily. Florence wore a dress not as

if coming off a journey, at least not a traveling dress, but a simple walking dress; she had on a bonnet, rather a pretty one, but I should doubt if it had cost more than half-a-guinea (unless they charge high in dreams); and it was lined with rose-coloured silk; but the ribbons, I think, were white (is *that* allowable?); and certainly the prevailing hue of the general dress was white. Florence did not look back; and how she accounted for Emily's not following is best known to herself. A shadow fell upon me, and a feeling of sadness, which increased continually as no Emily entered at the door, which, however, still stood open; so, you know, there was nothing to hinder her coming after all, if it was that she had only been loitering. But it relieved my feeling of sadness that Florence, of whose features I had the steadiest view, seemed cheerful, though not smiling. I felt it strange that I could not question her, notwithstanding that obliquely she was continually nearing my position. If I could catch her eye I felt that I could speak to her - not else; and this I could not do. What Florence was making for must have been a garden, still, solitary, and rich in excess of flowers past all counting, and gayer than any I had ever seen. The garden was on my right hand; the positions, in fact, were these: [here De Quincey inserts a diagram]. *T* is the door of entrance; *M* is Florence; *X* is myself in an unphilosophic mood of irritation, and, I fear, likely soon to become waspish if I should not succeed in arresting Florence's eye. However, I did *not* succeed; neither did Emily come so long as I staid, which might be six to eight minutes. Suddenly all vanished; and I was broad awake, with no chance of ever intercepting the obstinate and unfilial Florence on her diagonal route to the flower-garden. I should mention, in order to complete the sketch, that although Florence continually advanced in the sense of widening her distance from the entrance-door, nevertheless she never came nearer to me, for the chamber floor expanded concurrently with her steps, which is an awkward thing, you know, when walking a match against time. The garden, I should add, *melted* into the chamber, through steps of transition which were indescribable.¹¹³

This is a dream, one might say, in which the rhetorician has not yet been to work. It is longer and lighter than the best of De Quincey's dream passages. De Quincey himself says this dream has 'callowness or freshness' but complains that it is 'dull, not offering variety enough.'¹¹⁴ It is, indeed, his emotion in an unusually plain state. The episode is described sympathetically and in some detail but nothing is developed, nothing is embellished, nothing is condensed. De Quincey is fidgety and diffuse throughout this description.

Nevertheless, as Eaton points out, the dream is full of 'certain characteristic qualities',

- the "spacious chamber"; the distinct but vague voice announcing *Florence and Emily*; the definiteness of the figure: Florence's mysterious actions; the "shadow" falling upon him, the "feeling of sadness" increasing upon him as Emily did not appear; the inability to catch Florence's eye and to arrest her progress; the floor expanding "concurrently with her steps."¹¹⁵

Thus, while the overall rendering of the dream is prosaic, its essential features constitute the raw material of a characteristically De Quinceyan spot of time.

How might the rhetorician prepare this dream for a place in the *Confessions Trilogy*? The bluntness of assertions like 'the obstinate and unfilial Florence' or 'myself in an unphilosophic mood of irritation' would need to be softened down and abstracted. Better organization would make it possible to avoid the feebleness of concluding with 'I should mention, in order to complete the sketch' and 'I should add.' Judicious compression could remove the repetition of a phrase like 'feeling of sadness' twice in two sentences. The dream's irrelevancies could be cleared away: no diagrams, no parenthetical remarks about

fashion sense, no distracting comments regarding the cost of a dress. De Quincey would then be free to seize on the dream's most suggestive details, structure them, ornament them, meld them together. He could exploit, for example, the 'spacious chamber' and its expanding floor as he exploits the 'power of endless growth and self-reproduction' in the architectural dreams of *Confessions*. He might lament Emily's failure to appear as he laments Ann's failure to appear in *Confessions* or, more poignantly, Elizabeth's failure to reappear in *Suspiria*. De Quincey's inability to catch Florence's eye could take on the urgency of his inability to gain the attention of the young couple abroad the gig in *The Mail-Coach*. The 'shadow' that falls upon him might be developed like the critical moment in *Confessions* when 'the passion deepen[s]' and 'some greater interest [is] at stake; some mightier cause than ever yet the sword had pleaded, or trumpet had proclaimed.'¹¹⁶ As it now stands, the dream of '*Florence and Emily*' is a sketch, a mapping in. One might speculate that, at one stage, the dream sequences of the *Trilogy* existed in a similar state. Then De Quincey as rhetorician set to work, weeding out from the several drafts what was unnecessary, tightening the structure of the various sentiments and thoughts, fastening on details and exalting their significance until he wrought the compression and the sweep of impassioned prose.

De Quincey uses impassioned prose to describe many separate moments of severe personal sorrow. In doing so, he emphasizes the fact that Elizabeth, Ann, Catherine and many others have died and cannot be restored to life. Yet for De Quincey these same descriptions ensure that there is a vivid record of the central figures of his past. Impassioned bravuras enable him to at least partially reclaim what death has taken from him. They constitute one of his principal means of defence against the agents of misery and the passage of time.

There is, however, a second and more fundamental way in which impassioned prose enables De Quincey to combat grief. Like many of his contemporaries, De Quincey believes that sorrow is a source of knowledge and redemption. Keats asks: 'Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a soul? A Place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways!'¹¹⁷ Byron's *Manfred* avers,

Grief should be the instructor of the wise;
Sorrow is knowledge: they who know the most
Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,
The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life.¹¹⁸

Coleridge saw Lamb's grief after his sister Mary had killed their mother as evidence of the merciful, if mysterious, ways of God. Mary 'is recovered', he intones,

and is acquainted with what she has done, and is very calm. She is a truly pious woman; and her Brother, whose soul is almost wrapped up in her, hath had his heart purified by this horror of desolation, and prostrates his Spirit at the throne of God in believing Silence. The Terrors of the Almighty are the whirlwind, the earthquake, and the Fire that precede the still small voice of his love. The pestilence of our lusts must be scattered, the strong-layed Foundations of our Pride blown up, & the stubble & chaff of our Vanities burnt, ere we can give ear to the inspeaking Voice of Mercy, "Why *will* ye die?"¹¹⁹

De Quincey makes redemptive suffering the central idea *Suspiria*. 'Oh grief!', he writes,

thou art classed amongst the depressing passions.
And true it is, that thou humblest to the dust, but also
thou exaltest to the clouds. Thou shakest as with

ague, but also thou steadiest like frost. Thou
sickenest the heart, but also thou healest its
infirmities.¹²⁰

For De Quincey and for many of his contemporaries, grief was a 'depressing passion' that nevertheless exalted, steadied and healed the spirit.

Impassioned prose is the most dramatic evidence that De Quincey's spirit has been at least steadied after any given affliction. Grief often strikes De Quincey down; sometimes, as in the case of Elizabeth, he does not write about it for many years. Yet rarely does grief leave De Quincey completely silent. Throughout the course of his writings he chronicles in impassioned prose all the major afflictions of his life, from his early dream of the brutal nurse who took care of his sister Jane to the horrendous opium crisis of 1843-44. Grief smote De Quincey but it also bestows upon him the energy and insight necessary to produce impassioned prose. And impassioned prose, by embracing and defining grief, enables De Quincey to rise above grief. It is the medium that incarnates the process whereby he derives strength from suffering and grandeur from despair. It is De Quincey's show of strength, evidence that the fierceness of his misery has wrought, not inactivity, but an exuberant medium with which to describe and exploit that misery. Against the onslaught of affliction, impassioned prose is De Quincey's response, his compromise, his bulwark.

One of the saddest moments in De Quincey is a rare occasion when grief actually does choke his utterance. It is Christmas night, 1843 and for the third time in his life De Quincey has collapsed before the dark idol of opium. He realizes that he is trapped and the hideousness of his condition triggers an impassioned response. But on this occasion the response is halting and of little use. Misery soon blocks up De

Quincey's rhetorical faculty and he is left almost defenceless. He says he will exercise as a means of overcoming his anguish, a tactic he successfully employs during many of his battles with opium. But in this instance his main weapon – the brandishing of rhetoric – is of no avail. 'This night', he writes,

Wednesday, December 25, about 7 p.m., has first solemnly revealed itself to me that I am and have long been under a curse, all the greater for being physically and by effort endurable, and for hiding itself, *i.e.*, playing in and out from all offices of life at every turn of every moment. Oh, dreadful! by degrees infinitely worse than leprosy – than –. But oh, what signifies the rhetoric of a case so sad! Conquer it I must by exercise unheard of, or it will conquer me.¹²¹

De Quincey's impassioned reply collapses under the weight of the sorrow it describes. His rhetoric is on this occasion paralysed. In the vast majority of instances, however, it is otherwise. Through the agencies of rhetoric De Quincey cauterises his wounds and confounds his misery. Impassioned prose enables him both to partially reclaim the central figures of his past and to harness suffering as a means with which to rise above suffering.

De Quincey has one other use for impassioned prose – the creation of elaborate and complex prose poems in which his convictions about the beneficent powers of grief are transformed into myth. In the heightened passages of 'The Vision of Sudden Death' from *The Mail-Coach* and 'The Affliction of Childhood' from *Suspiria* De Quincey is largely concerned with the knowledge and strength he gains in personal battles with anguish: terrified efforts to save the young couple in 'Sudden Death', the misery of Elizabeth's death in 'Affliction.' But in the finales to 'Sudden Death' and 'Affliction' – 'The Dream-Fugue'

from *The Mail-Coach* and bravuras from *Suspiria* like 'The Apparition of Brocken', 'Savannah-La-Mar' and 'Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow' - De Quincey abstracts and universalises his personal anguish into a series of myths in which the knowledge conferred upon him by critical episodes of misery is transfigured into the knowledge conferred upon everyman when he is forced to confront misery.

'The Dying Trumpeter' of 'The Fugue' and 'The Dark Interpreter' of 'Brocken' and 'Savannah' are central figures in De Quincey's mythology. It is the two blasts from the horn of 'The Dying Trumpeter' that locks the rampaging coach into stony silence and thus enables the innocent young girl to be delivered from a collision of certain death before a third blast from 'The Trumpeter's' horn unlocks the coach into life again. 'The Dark Interpreter' is a figure that haunts De Quincey's dreams and 'does his work, revealing the worlds of pain and agony and woe possible to man - possible even to the innocent spirit of a child.' It is 'The Dark Interpreter' that shows De Quincey the sunken world of Savannah-La-Mar and explains to him that God subjects mankind to misery because misery is essential to the development of the human intellect. "'Oh, deep is the ploughing of grief!'", whispers 'The Dark Interpreter' to De Quincey,

But oftentimes less would not suffice for the
agriculture of God. Upon a night of earthquake he
builds a thousand years of pleasant habitations for
man. Upon the sorrows of an infant, he raises
oftentimes from human intellects glorious vintages
that could not else have been. Less than these fierce
ploughshares would not have stirred the stubborn
soil.¹²²

'Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow' is De Quincey's most powerful expression of the myth of redemptive suffering. Levana herself, De

Quincey explains, is the Roman Goddess that 'watches over human education.' 'By the education of Levana', however,

is meant - not the poor machinery that moves by spelling-books and grammars, but that mighty system of central forces hidden in the deep bosom of human life, which by passion, by strife, by temptation, by the energies of resistance, works for ever upon children....Therefore it is that Levana often communes with the powers that shake man's heart: therefore it is that she doats upon grief.¹²³

Levana has three ministers of sorrow - '*Mater Lachrymarum*', '*Mater Suspiriorum*' and '*Mater Tenebrarum*' - each of whom represents a different and progressively more severe form of grief. De Quincey initially refers to these three sisters as "the Sorrows." But as a myth-maker he soon reconsiders. 'If I say simply - "The Sorrows"', he explains,

there will be a chance of mistaking the term; it might be understood of individual sorrow - separate cases of sorrow, - whereas I want a term expressing the mighty abstractions that incarnate themselves in all individual sufferings of man's heart; and I wish to have these abstractions presented as impersonations, that is, as clothed with human attributes of life, and with functions pointing to flesh. Let us call them, therefore, *Our Ladies of Sorrow*.¹²⁴

De Quincey personifies Levana and her three sisters with a blend of visual and aural imagery. He designates *Mater Lachrymarum* 'Our Lady of Tears', *Mater Suspiriorum* 'Our Lady of Sighs' and *Mater Tenebrarum* 'Our Lady of Darkness' to indicate the type of sorrow endured in each kingdom. He paints in detail what the sisters wear, who they assail, how they move, where they travel, the look of their eyes, the carriage of their heads, the extent of their respective dominions. He merges

their actions with the wind, the twilight, the tides and he has 'heard their mysteries oftentimes deciphered by harp and timbrel, by dulcimer and organ.' He notes, too, that 'like God, whose servants they are, they utter their pleasure, not by sounds that perish, or by words that go astray, but by signs in heaven - by changes on earth - by pulses in secret rivers - heraldries painted on darkness - and hieroglyphics written on the tablets of the brain.'¹²⁵ By fusing this diverse set of images, De Quincey gives substance to his three Ladies of Sorrow.

De Quincey's personal suffering is behind the conception of each of the three sisters; he says at the outset of 'Levana' that he is known to 'all three.' *Mater Lachrymarum* is the eldest sister. 'Her eyes are sweet and subtle', De Quincey avers,

wild and sleepy by turns; oftentimes rising to the clouds; oftentimes challenging the heavens. She wears a diadem round her head. And I knew by childish memories that she could go abroad upon the winds, when she heard the sobbing of litanies or the thundering of organs, and when she beheld the mustering of summer clouds.¹²⁶

De Quincey met *Mater Lachrymarum* for the first time during the Sunday morning church services he attended as a young boy when, as he describes in *Suspiria*, the grief he felt at the death of Elizabeth combined with 'the hint from the Litany, the fragment from the clouds...the storied windows....[and] the blare of the tumultuous organ' to set before him a scene in which 'dying children...were tossing in anguish, and weeping clamorously for death' and 'God, for some mysterious reason, could not suddenly release them from their pain.'¹²⁷

Mater Suspriorum is the second sister. 'She never scales the clouds', De Quincey advises,

nor walks abroad upon the winds. She wears no diadem. And her eyes, if they were ever seen, would be neither sweet nor subtle....She weeps not. She groans not. But she sighs inaudibly at intervals....Our Lady of Sighs never clamours, never defies, dreams not of rebellious aspirations. She is humble to abjectness. Hers is the meekness that belongs to the hopeless.¹²⁸

Perhaps De Quincey's most poignant meeting with *Mater Suspiriorum* was during the opium crisis of 1843-1844. At this time he was stunned by the realization that his dependence on the drug was complete and inescapable. 'Were the ruin conditional, or were it in any point doubtful', he explained in the 'Introductory Notice' of *Suspiria*,

it would be natural to utter ejaculations, and to seek sympathy. But where the ruin is understood to be absolute, where sympathy cannot be consolation, and counsel cannot be hope, this is otherwise. The voice perishes; the gestures are frozen; and the spirit of man flies back upon its own centre. I, at least, upon seeing those awful gates closed and hung with draperies of woe, as for a death already past, spoke not, nor started, nor groaned. One profound sigh ascended from my heart, and I was silent for days.¹²⁹

Mater Tenebrarum is the final sister. 'Her kingdom is not large', whispers De Quincey,

or else no flesh should live; but within that kingdom all power is hers....Through the treble veil of crape which she wears, the fierce light of a blazing misery, that rest not for matins or for vespers - for noon of day or noon of night - for ebbing or for flowing tide - may be read from the very ground. She is the defier of God. She also is the mother of lunacies, and the suggestress of suicides.¹³⁰

De Quincey was visited many times by *Mater Tenebrarum*, from 'the state of gloom...amounting at last to utter darkness, as of some suicidal despondency' in 1817 to that same opium crisis of 1843-1844 when, in addition to an encounter with 'Our Lady of Sighs', De Quincey appears to have passed through the realm of 'Our Lady of Darkness.' In the spring of 1844 he wrote to his friend Professor Lushington:

On Friday the 23d. of February, I might say for the first time, in scriptural words, "And the man was sitting clothed and in his right mind." That is not too strong an expression. I had known all along, and too ominously interpreted the experience from the fact, that I was not in my perfect mind....There is something shocking, and generally childish, by too obvious associations, in any suggestions of suicide; but too certainly I felt that to this my condition tended; for again enormous irritability was rapidly travelling over the disk of my life, and this, and the consciousness of increasing weakness, added to my desolation of heart. I felt that no man could continue to struggle.¹³¹

De Quincey's intimate knowledge of the three sisters - his passage from the world of Our Lady of Tears through to the lower kingdom of Our Lady of Sighs and finally down into the abyss of Our Lady of Darkness - results in an utter desolation of the spirit. Yet in the end De Quincey rises Phoenix-like from these ashes, a man profoundly knowledgeable of the primal secrets of life. *Mater Lachrymarum*, speaking to her two sisters when the young De Quincey is as yet unacquainted with them, describes what the outcome will be once De Quincey has been forced to battle in all their respective realms of grief. 'So shall he be accomplished in the furnace', she tells *Mater Suspiriorum* and *Mater Tenebrarum*,

- so shall he see things that ought *not* to be seen - sights that are abominable, and secrets that are unutterable. So shall he read elder truths, sad truths, grand truths, fearful truths. So shall he rise again *before* he dies. And so shall our commission be accomplished which from God we had - to plague his heart until we had unfolded the capacities of his spirit.¹³²

By creating the three sisters of sorrow and describing what their actions can do to fashion the mind of man, De Quincey translates his own experience into myth. As *Mater Lachrymarum*, *Mater Suspiriorum* and *Mater Tenebrarum* work to unfold the capacities of De Quincey's spirit, so they stand poised to unfold the capacity of every spirit.

Masson writes that

as the Graces are three, as the Fates are three, as the Furies are three, as the Muses were originally three, so may the varieties and degrees of misery that there are in the world, and the proportions of their distribution among mankind, be represented to the human imagination for ever by De Quincey's Three Ladies of Sorrow and his sketch of their figures and kingdoms.¹³³

De Quincey's various accounts of his suffering, and his adaptation of these sufferings into myth, owe a great deal to the power he attributes to his dreaming mind. De Quincey dreamt vividly throughout his life, from 'a remarkable dream of terrific grandeur' which occurred 'before I could have completed my second year' to his striking deathbed delirium when he seems to have caught sight of Elizabeth.¹³⁴ De Quincey believes that man's dreaming faculty is of paramount importance. 'The machinery for dreaming planted in the human brain was not planted for nothing', he declares.

That faculty, in alliance with the mystery of darkness, is the one great tube through which man communicates with the shadowy. And the dreaming organ, in connexion with the heart, the eye, and the ear, compose the magnificent apparatus which forces the infinite into the chambers of a human brain, and throws dark reflections from eternities below all life upon the mirrors of the sleeping mind.¹³⁵

According to De Quincey, a number of different factors promote the dreaming faculty. 'Intense exercise' assists 'the faculty of dreaming almost preternaturally', he asserts. Solitude and contemplation are listed as essential if a man is to dream spectacularly. 'Whatever may be the number of those in whom this faculty of dreaming splendidly can be supposed to lurk', De Quincey states,

there are not perhaps very many in whom it is developed. He whose talk is of oxen, will probably dream of oxen: and the condition of human life, which yokes so vast a majority to a daily experience incompatible with much elevation of thought, oftentimes neutralises the tone of grandeur in the reproductive faculty of dreaming, even for those whose minds are populous with solemn imagery. Habitually to dream magnificently, a man must have a constitutional determination to reverie.¹³⁶

In De Quincey's opinion, however, 'beyond all others...opium' is the agency that most fundamentally promotes the dreaming faculty. 'Indeed', De Quincey stresses, opium 'seems to possess a *specific* power in that direction; not merely for exalting the colours of dream-scenery, but for deepening its shadows; and, above all, for strengthening the sense of its fearful *realities*.'¹³⁷

De Quincey's dreaming mind keeps forever before him sorrowful episodes from his past. In Book Eleven of *The Prelude* Wordsworth comments poignantly,

The days gone by
Come back upon me from the dawn almost
Of life: the hiding-places of my power
Seem open; I approach, and then they close;
I see by glimpses now; when age comes on,
May scarcely see at all.¹³⁸

The dreaming mind was the hiding-place of De Quincey's power and it did not close when he approached. In fact, bolstered by a tenacious memory and what he calls 'the higher faculty of an electric aptitude for seizing analogies'¹³⁹, De Quincey's dreaming mind haunts and pursues him 'from the dawn almost Of life.' In *Suspiria* he records that it was while he was a student at Oxford that 'now first the agitations of my childhood re-opened in strength, now first they swept in upon the brain with power and the grandeur of recovered life.' In the final version of the *Confessions* he writes that 'the search after the lost features of Ann, which I spoke of as pursued in the crowds of London, was in a more proper sense pursued through many a year in dreams.' In 'The Fugue' De Quincey declares that 'after thirty years' his dreams about the collision between the mail-coach and the gig 'have lost no element of horror.' In the 'Affliction' section of the *Autobiographical Sketches* De Quincey inserts the prose poem 'The Apparition of Brocken' under the title "Dream-Echoes Fifty Years Later." De Quincey concludes both versions of *Confessions* with a testimony to the tenacity of his dreaming mind. 'One memorial of my former condition still remains', he writes: 'my dreams are not yet perfectly calm: the dread swell and agitation of the storm have not wholly subsided: the legions that encamped in them are drawing off, but not all departed: my sleep is still tumultuous.'¹⁴⁰ Throughout his writings De Quincey's dreaming mind appears as a nemesis, dogging his steps and revitalising old grief.

It is, however, characteristic of De Quincey that the one faculty that so stalks and debilitates him should be the faculty he prizes above all others. De Quincey's dreaming mind is a pipeline down into darkened worlds of grief, worlds filled with the people, events and reading material of his past. De Quincey's dreaming mind brings this mysterious world of grief to the surface in recognisable but abstracted patterns that then tyrannise over his sleeping and waking mind. Yet De Quincey values this tyranny because he sees it as essential to the development of the human spirit. Indeed, as the rhetorician he seizes on the personal and mythic figures of grief that populate his dreaming mind and exploits and develops them into his vision of redemptive sorrow. De Quincey believes the dreaming mind 'is the one great tube through which man communicates with the shadowy.' He believes, too, that 'misery is the talisman by which man communicates with the world outside of our fleshy world.'¹⁴¹ The rhetorician taps these two sources of 'power' in order to display in impassioned prose the role grief and the dreaming faculty play in unfolding the capacity of the human soul.

The *Confessions Trilogy* is De Quincey's paean to the powers of sorrow and the importance of dreaming. In a world of ceaseless agitation and tremendous industrial advance, it stresses the need for contemplation, solitude and reverie. It emphasizes the significance of individual experience, the import of a single critical moment and the depth and grandeur of the human spirit. The *Trilogy's* finest passages are crafted in a impassioned prose style that has its roots in the writings of Browne, Taylor and Burke, though De Quincey transfigures and develops this medium so that it is capable of rendering both an internal exploration of individual experience and the broader complexities of myth. Putting man back in touch with his heart is a

crucial element in social restoration. *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, *Suspiria de Profundis* and *The English Mail-Coach* constitute his highest attempt to create 'power' that will galvanize and rejuvenate the vital activities of man's heart. In these three works De Quincey creates a vivid and enduring record of the resilience of the human soul and affirms that within man lie the spiritual and emotional forces capable of countering the blight of industrial development and the uncertainty of the age.

Epilogue

In 1822 De Quincey told James Hessey of the *London Magazine* that he was working on a 'sort of *Ana*' which would include 'History - Criticism - Human Life - Love - Marriage - Courtship - Polit. Econ. - Literature - Anecdotes of lit. men - Mathematics - Morals - Coleridge - Wordsworth - Myself in childhood in ref. to Educ. - Germ. Literature - &c. &c. &c. &c.' De Quincey never produced such a work but if one adds such things as 'philosophy', 'novels', 'translations' and 'linguistics' to the list his collective writings may be said to compose this '*Ana*'.¹ De Quincey wrote actively for over fifty years and produced a remarkably competent and diverse body of work. Almost all of it appeared in the magazines. Penury put him under the constant necessity of manufacturing articles but he was temperamentally inclined to the rollicking high spirits and intellectual badinage of this medium.

Critical opinion of De Quincey's output has always been mixed but of late it has swung decidedly in his favour. The diversity of his work and the complexities of his achievement have been discussed at length. Yet several different commentators, working from strikingly different critical perspectives, have agreed that there are certain key patterns or themes which make of De Quincey's disparate output a unified whole. This thesis has not come to the same conclusions as others regarding what patterns give unity to De Quincey's work, but it has argued that certain central patterns do indeed exist.

De Quincey was, before all else, a writer for the magazines and almost everything he produced must be judged within the context of this medium. It was his job to amuse and instruct, to deride, plead and reveal with as much novelty and zeal as he could muster. Ingrained in

almost every article he wrote is the eminently logical nature of his mind. De Quincey could rearrange and brighten the details of a story or set down a definition with matchless lucidity. But he could also become so intensely analytical that he became simply unintelligent. Pervading the whole of De Quincey's work is the influence of Wordsworth. The poet is discussed, quoted and assimilated on countless occasions. Even highly distinctive pieces of De Quinceyan prose like *Suspiria* have Wordsworth at their root. Finally, De Quincey's essays are crafted in a supple and mellifluous style that is capable of moving effortlessly from the silly to the sublime. In its most exalted moments it creates a 'power' that De Quincey hoped would enliven the moral capacities of man's heart. These are the four salient strands in De Quincey's work. From them he weaves the diversity, the subtleties and the uniqueness of his genius.

Endnotes

Chapter One: The Literary Figure

- ¹ Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Powers of the Human Mind*, III vols. (Edinburgh: Bell and Bradfute, 1803), I, 465-466.
- ² Robinson: I, 267; cited in Masson ('Dialogues of Three Templars', 1824), IX, 39; Masson: ('Letter of William Hazlitt Respecting the Foregoing Article', 1823), IX, 20; cited in P.P. Howe, *The Life of William Hazlitt*, (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1922), 331; Carlyle, *Letters*: III, 260; VI, 371.
- ³ *The Letters of Edward FitzGerald*, IV vols., eds. Alfred M. Terhune and Annabelle B. Terhune (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), I, 159; Julius Hare, 'Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the English Opium-Eater' in the *British Magazine*, (VII, 1835), 25; cited by David Wright, 'Introduction' in *Recollections*, 25; *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, XX vols., eds. W. Charvat, R.H. Pearce, C.M. Simpson, *et al.* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1962-1988), XVII, 202; Anon., 'Thomas De Quincey' in the *Athenaeum* (17 December, 1859), 814.
- ⁴ *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, vols. xi-xxii, ed. C.S. Dessain (London: Nelson, 1961-1972), XX, 54.
- ⁵ Anon., 'De Quincey and his Writings' in the *British Quarterly Review* (London: Jackson, Walford and Hodder, 1863), LXXX, 14; *The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Humphry House, completed by G. Storey (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 53.
- ⁶ James Hutchison Stirling, 'De Quincey and Coleridge Upon Kant' in the *Fortnightly Review* (New Series, X, 1867), 383; Leslie Stephen, 'Thomas De Quincey' in *De Quincey Selections*, ed. M.R. Ridley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 30.
- ⁷ Richard Le Gallienne, 'Introduction' in *The Opium Eater and Essays by Thomas De Quincey*, (London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1898), vii; Mrs. Oliphant, *Annals of a Publishing House: William Blackwood and his Sons*, II vols., (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1897), I, 422.

⁸ V.R., 'De Quincey: Some Objections and Correction' in *Notes and Queries* (14 December, 1940), 417; (17 June, 1939), 417; (21 December, 1940), 435.

⁹ Goldman, 9.

¹⁰ Howard Mills, *Peacock - his Circle and his Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 53; John Jordan, 'Introduction' in *De Quincey as Critic* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul), 1973; V.A. De Luca, *Thomas De Quincey: The Prose of Vision* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), ix-x; F.W.J. Hemmings, *Baudelaire the Damned: A Biography* (London: H. Hamilton, 1982), 157.

¹¹ Christopher Gillie, 'Further Reading and Reference' in *The Cambridge Guide to the Arts in Britain*, IX vols., ed. Boris Ford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), VI, 311; Ian Jack speaks of the 'Confessions of 1822' ['De Quincey Revises his *Confessions*' in *PMLA* (LXXII, 1957), 122]; Alethea Hayter writes 'ever since the publication of *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater* in 1822' [*Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), 36]; De Luca entitles one of his chapters 'Confessions of an English Opium-Eater, 1822' (Thomas De Quincey: *The Prose of Vision*, 12-34).

¹² Eric Christiansen, 'Portrait of an Artist for Young Men' in *The Independent* (18 May, 1991), 29.

¹³ De Quincey himself signed his name with both a small and a large 'D' but confusion still exists because critics have been unable to agree on a standard spelling. Recently, for example, Edmund Baxter writes 'De Quincey' [*De Quincey's Art of Autobiography* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990)], John Beer writes 'de Quincey' ('Literature' in *The Cambridge Guide to the Arts in Britain*, VI, 99-100) and Mark Philip writes 'DeQuincey' [*Godwin's Political Justice* (London: Duckworth, 1986), 100]. One might add that there is further confusion when De Quincey's name is indexed: sometimes it appears under 'D' and sometimes under 'Q.' The standard edition of Wordsworth's *Letters* is a microcosm of the muddle. De Quincey is a 'D' in *The Early Years* (706), a 'Q' in *The Middle Years, Part I* (538), *The Middle Years, Part II* (681) and *The Later Years, I* (719) and then back to a 'D' for *The Later Years II* (765), *III* (771) and *IV* (924).

- 14 *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, III vols., ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Harvard: Belknap Press, 1978), II, 339; cited in *The Life of Charles Lamb*, II vols., E.V. Lucas (London: Methuen and Company, 1905), II, 69; *The Letters of Sara Hutchinson from 1800 to 1835*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), 354; Coleridge, *Letters*: VI, 911.
- 15 *The Letters of the Brontës: A Selection*, ed. Muriel Spark (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 134; Frederick S. Rockwell, 'De Quincey and the Ending of *Moby-Dick* in *Nineteenth Century Fiction* (IX, 1954), 161; Anon., 'Thomas De Quincey and his Works' in the *Westminster Review* (London: John Chapman, 1854), New Series, V, 520.
- 16 Anon., Review of '*Selections, Grave and Gay*, by Thomas De Quincey' in the *Eclectic Review* (New Series, VIII, 1854), 398, 399.
- 17 Cited in Thomas McFarland, *Romantic Cruxes: The English Essayists and the Spirit of the Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 100; T.E. Kebbel, Review of '*Selections, Grave and Gay*, by Thomas De Quincey' in the *Quarterly Review* (CX, 1861), 1; cited in Christopher Herbert, 'De Quincey and Dickens' in *Victorian Studies* (XVII, 1974), 247; *The Letters of John Addington Symonds*, III vols., eds. Herbert M. Schueller and Robert L. Peters (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969), III, 271.
- 18 Virginia Woolf, 'Impassioned Prose' in *Collected Essays*, IV vols., ed. L. Woolf (London: Hogarth, 1966-67), I, 172.
- 19 *Collected Letters of Bernard Shaw*, IV vols., ed. Dan H. Laurence (London: Max Reinhardt, 1965-1988), II, 476; *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence*, VII vols., ed. James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978 - continuing), III, 407; Letters of Wallace Stevens, ed. Holly Stevens, (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 29-30; *Dylan Thomas: Early Prose Writings*, ed. Walford Davis (London: J.M. Dent, 1971), 157; *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, eds., Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968), IV, 98-101.
- 20 Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1975), 140 (The ellipses are Lowry's).

- 21 Jorge Luis Borges, 'To a Certain Ghost, 1940' in *In Praise of Darkness*, trans. Norman Thomas di Giovanni (London: Allen Lane, 1975), 53, 55.
- 22 J. Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God* (Harvard: Belknap Press, 1975), 1, 19, 78, 79.
- 23 David Wright, 'Introduction' in *Recollections*, Charles Proudfit, 'Thomas De Quincey and Sigmund Freud: Sons, Fathers, Dreamers - Precursors of Psychoanalytic Developmental Psychology' in *Bicentenary Studies*, 88-89; Laurence Stapleton, *The Elected Circle: Studies in the Art of Prose* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 165, 121; Alethea Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*, 103.
- 24 Robert Maniquis, 'Lonely Empires: Personal and Public Visions of Thomas De Quincey' in *Literary Monographs*, vol. VIII, eds. Eric Rothstein and J.A. Wittreich (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 51, 88; John Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey: A Psychopathology of Imperialism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 34, 21.
- 25 Stephen J. Spector, 'Thomas De Quincey: Self-effacing Autobiographer' in *Studies in Romanticism* (XVIII, 1979), 501; Baxter, *De Quincey's Art of Autobiography*, 28.
- 26 Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey*, 23.
- 27 Grevel Lindop, 'Introduction' to *Confessions*, xviii; Geoffrey Carnall, *Robert Southey and his Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 139; De Luca, *Thomas De Quincey: The Prose of Vision*, 122.
- 28 Miller, *The Disappearance of God*, xviii; Maniquis, 'Lonely Empires: Personal and Public Visions of Thomas De Quincey' in *Literary Monographs*, 52; Baxter, *De Quincey's Art of Autobiography*, 3; Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey*, 23.
- 29 Baxter, *De Quincey's Art of Autobiography*, 11.
- 30 Unless otherwise indicated, all references to the *Confessions* will be to the version of 1821.
- 31 I adopt this title primarily for brevity of expression but it is commonplace in De Quincey criticism to group these three works

together. See Lindop's edition of *Confessions*; see, too, De Luca, *Thomas De Quincey: The Prose of Vision*, x, or Maniquis, 'Lonely Empires: Personal and Public Visions of Thomas De Quincey' in *Literary Monographs*, 51-52.

³² See Jordan, 144.

³³ Coleridge, *Letters* I, 453.

³⁴ *Suspiria*, 144

Chapter Two: The Periodical Writer

¹ Coleridge, *Letters*: III, 253

² Carlyle, *Letters*: VI, 449; *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: W.H. Allen, 1970), 280.

³ This statement appears in both versions of the *Confessions*. See Masson: III, 413-414 and *Confessions*, 62.

⁴ Hazlitt, *Works*: XVI, 221.

⁵ *Byron's Letters and Journals*, XII vols., ed. Leslie A. Marchand (London: John Murray, 1973-1981), VIII, 103.

⁶ Cited in John Butt, *English Literature in the Mid-Eighteenth Century*, ed. and completed by Geoffrey Carnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 323.

⁷ *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*, ed. J.E. Morpurgo (London: The Cresset Press, 1949), 223.

⁸ Japp, 154.

⁹ Masson: (Story of Libel', 1841), III, 174.

- 10 Cited by William Ward, 'Periodical Literature' in *Some British Romantics*, ed. James V. Logan *et al.* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1966), 298; Tave, 338.
- 11 Cited by Caseby, 129.
- 12 *Recollections*, 304-305.
- 13 See *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 244-246, 250-251, 253; Coleridge, *Letters* III, 168.
- 14 Masson: (Sir William Hamilton, 1852), V, 326; *Post. Works*: ('Cause of the Novel's Decline'), I, 300.
- 15 See Joanne Shattock, *Politics and Reviewers: The Edinburgh and the Quarterly in the Early Victorian Age* (Leicester: University of Leicester Press, 1989), 7.
- 16 Tave, 212-214. De Quincey distinguished between the political nature of the reviews and the diversity favoured by the magazines as early as 1821 (see Tim Chilcott, *A Publisher and his Circle: The Life and Work of John Taylor* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972], 142).
- 17 Japp, 19-20.
- 18 Masson: ('Confessions'), III, 332-333.
- 19 F.D. Tredley, *The House of Blackwood* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1954), 77-78.
- 20 *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, III vols., ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Harvard: Belknap Press, 1978), II, 340.
- 21 Masson: ('Secession from the Church of Scotland', 1844), XIV, 221; ('A Tory's Account of Toryism, Whiggism, and Radicalism', 1835), IX, 313; ('Revolt of the Tartars', 1837), VII, 368.
- 22 Wordsworth, *Letters: The Middle Years, Part I*, 283.
- 23 *Recollections*, 189, 131, 141-142, 217, 136.
- 24 Cited in Lindop, 315-316.

- 25 Harriet Martineau, *Biographical Sketches* (London: Macmillan, 1868), 416.
- 26 Robinson: I, 273. Robinson speaks not of the *Recollections* but of the 'Autobiography' in *Tait's Magazine* as being 'painfully interesting.' It is clear, however, that he thought of the articles on Wordsworth and Coleridge as part of the *Autobiography* (see Robinson: II, 738, 767 and Masson: XIV, 383).
- 27 Cited in Caseby, 134; cited in Lindop, 242.
- 28 Masson: ('Goethe as Reflected in his Novel of *Wilhelm Meister*', 1824), XI, 223; Carlyle, *Letters*: III, 233.
- 29 Masson: ('Rhetoric', 1828) X, 97; Japp, 193; 'A Remarkable Series of Thirty-Seven Letters by Thomas De Quincey to William Tait, his Publisher' in *American Art Association*, Sales Catalogue 4289 (New York: 13-14 January, 1936), 43.
- 30 Tave, 239-242.
- 31 Masson: ('Schlosser's Literary History of the Eighteenth Century', 1847), XI, 49.
- 32 Elizabeth Bruss, *Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 122-123.
- 33 *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, III vols., ed. E.V. Lucas (London: Dent, 1935), II, 306.
- 34 See Eaton, 263.
- 35 *Confessions*, 1.
- 36 Japp, 387-388.
- 37 Cited in Carlyle, *Letters*: VI, 115.
- 38 See Masson, ('Editor's Preface'), IX, 9: 'As the politics of [Tait's] were strongly Whig or Whig-Radical, it was a boldness on the editor's or proprietor's part to admit such an exposition from so pronounced a

Tory [as De Quincey]; but [Tait] conceded the liberty in most handsome fashion. To save himself, however, from undue responsibility, he announced each article as "By the English Opium-Eater", and took the precaution also of subjoining editorial footnotes commenting on the views expressed, and sometimes pretty sarcastically.'

39 Robinson: I, 275.

40 Masson: ('John Paul Frederick Richter', 1821), XI, 266. *Post. Works*: ('The Rhapsodoi'), I, 307; ('Oliver Goldsmith', 1848), IV, 298-299.

41 *Post. Works*: ('Cause of the Novel's Decline'), I, 301.

42 *Ibid.*: ('Mr. Finlay's History of Greece'), II, 61-62; ('Memorial Chronology'), II, 147; *De Quincey and his Friends*, ('On the Supposed Scriptural Expression for Eternity', 1853), 297-298.

43 *Memorials*: II, 114; Masson: ('Walking Stewart', 1840), III, 100.

44 See, for example, Masson: ('William Wordsworth and Robert Southey', 1839), II, 320; ('A Tory's Account of Toryism, Whiggism, and Radicalism'), IX, 319-320; Japp, 357.

45 *Recollections*, 303; see also, *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 249 and above, 'Chapter IV', 105-107.

46 Masson: ('General Preface', 1853), I, 6-7.

47 Cited in Joanne Shattock, *Politics and Reviewers: The Edinburgh and the Quarterly in the Early Victorian Age*, 5-6; *Memorials*, II, 131.

48 *Ibid.*: ('A Tory's Account of Toryism, Whiggism, and Radicalism'), IX, 316; *Post. Works*: ('Daniel O'Connell'), I, 138; Masson: ('Professor Wilson', 1850), V, 293; ('Notes on Water Savage Landor', 1847 [revised, 1858]), XI, 412.

49 *De Quincey and his Friends*, 172; Masson: ('Introduction to the World of Strife', 1851-52), I, 102.

50 George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. David Carroll (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 189.

- 51 Cited in Tim Chilcott, *A Publisher and his Circle*, 159; NLS, MS 4046, ff. 142/143; NLS, MS 4055, ff. 150/151; cited in Edmund Baxter, 'Introduction' in *The Stranger's Grave* (London: Aporia Press, 1988), 5; NLS, MS 4048, f. 219; cited in Eaton, 348.
- 52 Masson: ('Political Parties in Modern England', 1837), IX, 356; see, for example, Eaton, 401, 481.
- 53 *Memorials*: II, 180-181; see also, Bonner, 107; *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 350; Masson, III, 216.
- 54 NLS, MS 1670, f. 74.
- 55 Japp, 292.
- 56 Ian Jack, *English Literature, 1815-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 304.
- 57 *De Quincey and his Friends*, 187; Lindop, 358.
- 58 Japp, 254.

Chapter Three: The Logician

- ¹ Coleridge, *Letters*: III, 205. (Coleridge is referring specifically to the months during which De Quincey oversaw the printing of Wordsworth's *The Convention of Cintra* pamphlet).
- ² *Confessions*, 5.
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ In his conversations with De Quincey just after the publication of *Confessions* Richard Woodhouse records that '[De Quincey] thinks very meanly of Dugald Stewart, who has no originality or grasp of mind in him, who constantly misunderstands and misquotes writers from taking their opinions at second-hand from others, and then falling foul of them....All Dugald Stewart's disquisitions are little, and the subject of them of no moment, even if true' (*De Quincey and his Friends*, 75-76);

De Quincey attacks both Stewart and Brown two years later in his 'Letters to a Young Man' [Masson: (1823), X, 68-69] and again in a late sketch of 'Professor Wilson' [(1850), V, 296-297].

⁵ *Confessions*, 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷ Masson: ('The Affliction of Childhood', 1853), I, 39.

⁸ *Ibid.*: ('Parentage and the Paternal Home', 1834), I, 24.

⁹ *Suspiria*, 129; ('Infant Literature', 1851-1852), I, 124-125.

¹⁰ Masson: III, 242, 240.

¹¹ *Suspiria*, 164; Masson: ('Translation of Horace's Ode I. 22', 1803), XIV, 368-369.

¹² *Confessions*, 6-7.

¹³ Japp, 21; Masson: ('Premature Manhood', 1834), I, 324.

¹⁴ *Confessions*, 9.

¹⁵ *Diary*, 153-154.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 144, 156; 164, 171; 209; 196.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 181-182.

¹⁹ Many contemporaries commented on De Quincey's egotism. In 1821 Robinson remarks: 'I then called on De Quincey - a visit of duty. De Quincey is a tiresome man, though certainly of great talent....He is in ill-health, is querulous, very strongly impressed with his own excellence' (Robinson: I, 275). In a letter of 1827 Carlyle writes, 'Poor Dequincey! He is essentially a gentle and genial little soul; only that the Liver is diseased, and the 'l-ety' is strong and both together sometimes upset his balance.' (Carlyle, *Letters*: IV, 282). In a nasty and largely inaccurate letter of 1852 Lockhart bites into De Quincey

with all the venom of the early *Blackwood's* days: 'I first met DQ. when on one of his excursion to Edinb perhaps thirty years ago', Lockhart remarks, 'and then, when sober, he was a very interesting companion - a good scholar and a sharp critic - arrogant enough already and pompous but not at all so absurdly as afterward' [cited by Robert Woof in *Thomas De Quincey: An English Opium Eater* (Cumbria: CN Print Ltd., 1985), 103].

20 *Diary*, 176; 179.

21 *Ibid.*, 141.

22 Masson: ('Recollections of Charles Lamb', 1838), III, 35; *De Quincey and his Friends*, 108; cited in Lindop, 131 (Lindop gives no reference for this citation).

23 *De Quincey and his Friends*, 109.

24 *Confessions*, 60.

25 *Recollections*, 38; *Confessions*, 65; Masson: ('Letters to a Young Man'), X, 60; see also, De Quincey's comment that Danish was 'a language which I had attained in the course of my studies' [('My Brother', 1838), I, 314], his 1819-1820 article on 'The Danish Origin of the Lake Country Dialect' [Caseby, 165-185] and his 1857 essay on 'The Lake Dialect' [*Uncoll. Works*, I, 265-274].

26 Robinson: I, 137.

27 *De Quincey and his Friends*, 241-242.

28 *Ibid.*, 73-74.

29 Masson: ('I Enter the World', 1834), I, 162.

30 *Confessions*, 38; *Diary*, 187; cf., 168; 194.

31 Wordsworth, *Letters: The Middle Years, Part I*, 283.

32 Cited in Caseby, 156.

33 *Confessions*, 20.

- 34 Masson: ('Confessions'), III, 315; ('Dialogues of Three Templars', 1824), IX, 41; *Confessions*, 25, 64; Masson: ('Malthus on the Measure of Value', 1823), IX, 34; Cf., ('Protestantism', 1847-1848), VIII, 255.
- 35 Virginia Woolf, 'The English Mail-Coach' in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf* VI vols., ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: The Hogarth Press, 1986), 366-367.
- 36 *Memorials*: II, 115-116; *Confessions*, 61, 64; *Memorials*: II, 114.
- 37 *Memorials*: II, 111.
- 38 Masson: ('On Christianity as an Organ of Political Movement', 1846), VIII, 211; *Uncoll. Writings*: ('The Lake Dialect', 1857), I, 268; *Recollections*, 370.
- 39 Goldman, 42-81, 160-163.
- 40 Masson: ('Thomas Noon Talfourd', 1840), III, 127.
- 41 *Ibid.*: ('Mr. John Taylor', 1840), III, 129; ('Memorial Chronology', 1850) XIV, 311; *Recollections*, 48-49.
- 42 For the fullest account of De Quincey's 'Philosophical Background' see Proctor, 14-66.
- 43 Masson: ('Plato's Republic', 1841), VIII, 58, 55.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 47, 56.
- 45 *Post. Works*: ('Some Thoughts on Biography'), I, 101; *Recollections*, 241.
- 46 Coleridge, for example, disliked Locke: 'Great at all times and almost incalculable are the influences of party spirit in exaggerating contemporary reputation', he writes; 'but never perhaps "from the first syllable of recorded time" were they exerted under such a concurrence and conjunction of fortunate accidents, of helping and furthering events and circumstances, as in the instance of MR. LOCKE [*Lay Sermons*, ed. R.J. White (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), 110]. Cf. also Hazlitt's remark that 'the great defect with which the "Essay on Human Understanding" is chargeable is, that there is not really a word about

the nature of the understanding in it, nor any attempt to shew what it is or whether it is or is not any thing, distinct from the faculty of simple perception [Hazlitt, *Works*, II, 146].

47 Masson: ('Oxford', 1835), II, 76.

48 Masson: ('The English Language', 1839), XIV, 148.

49 *Ibid.*: ('Dr. Samuel Parr', 1831), V, 95; ('Richard Bentley', 1830), IV, 135; ('Notes on Walter Savage Landor', 1847), XI, 399; *Recollections*, 39.

50 Masson: ('Superficial Knowledge', 1824), X, 451; ('Kant in his Miscellaneous Essays', 1830), VIII, 92.

51 *Ibid.*: ('German Studies and Kant in Particular'), II, 90; ('Dr. Samuel Parr', V, 110; ('Recollections of Hannah More', 1840), XIV, 127; 'In the little paper on "Miracles", De Quincey writes in a "Postscript", 'the reader who is new to the subject must understand that no question is raised (as too probably he will be supposing) on the possibility of a miracle. That question is left entirely untouched' [Masson: ("Postscript" to 'Miracles as Subjects of Testimony', 1858), VIII, 176].

52 *Ibid.*: ('Kant in his Miscellaneous Essays'), VIII, 95

53 *Ibid.*: ('Language'), X, 262; ('Letters to a Young Man'), X, 65.

54 *Ibid.*: ('German Studies and Kant in Particular'), II, 85-86.

55 *Ibid.*: II, 86, 89.

56 *Confessions*, 51, 55.

57 'Immanuel Kant and John Gottfried Herder' (1818), 'Immanuel Kant and Dr. Herschel' (1819), 'On the English Notices of Kant' (1823), 'Kant on National Character in Relation to the Sense of the Sublime and Beautiful' (1824), 'Kant's Abstract of Swedenborgianism' (1824), 'Kant's Idea of a Universal History on a Cosmopolitical Plan' (1824), 'The Last Days of Immanuel Kant' (1827), 'Kant in his Miscellaneous Essays' (1830), 'Kant on the Age of the Earth' (1833) and 'German Studies and Kant in Particular' (1836).

- 58 Sackville West, 76; Proctor, 30; Erhardt Essig, *Thomas De Quincey and Robert Pearce Gillies as Champions of German Literature and Thought*, (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1951), 253.
- 59 Rene Wellek, 'De Quincey's Status in the History of Ideas' in *Philological Quarterly* (vol. XIII, July, 1944), 250-251.
- 60 Rene Wellek, *Immanuel Kant in England, 1798-1838* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931), 180.
- 61 See, for example, Masson: ('Coleridge and Opium-Eating', 1845), V, 186-189, 200-204; *Recollections*, 37-41, though later De Quincey seems to regret these comments: 'A word or two about those accusations of plagiarism', he writes, 'of which far too much has been made by more than one critic; we ourselves having, perhaps, been guilty of too wantonly stirring these waters at one time of our lives; and in the attempt to make matters more clear, only, it may be, succeeded in muddying them' [*Post. Works*: ('Conversations and S.T. Coleridge'), II, 32]; Masson: ('Confessions'), III, 227-230.
- 62 Masson: ('Coleridge and Opium-Eating'), V, 182-183.
- 63 *Post. Works*: ('Conversation and S.T. Coleridge'), II, 16-17.
- 64 *Confessions*, 64.
- 65 Rene Wellek, 'De Quincey's Status in the History of Ideas', 271.
- 66 *Confessions*, 5.
- 67 Masson: ('German Studies and Kant in Particular'), II, 89; ('Recollections of Charles Lamb'), III, 82.
- 68 'Plato's Republic' is De Quincey's last article on philosophy. (His 1842 essay on the 'Philosophy of Herodotus' does not deal with 'philosophy' in the technical sense and his 1852 essay on 'Sir William Hamilton' does not deal with philosophy at all).
- 69 *De Quincey and his Friends*, 141; Japp, 423.
- 70 Coleridge, *Letters*: III, 476.
- 71 Masson: ('Letters to a Young Man'), X, 78.

- 72 Masson: ('Rosicrucians and the Free-Masons', 1824), XIII, 384-385.
- 73 Tave: ('Letters of Junius', 1827-1828), 236-246, 247-262, 263-271; Masson: ('Mr. Taylor's Book on Junius', 1840), III, 132-143; ('On Junius' in 'Schlosser's Literary History' 1847), XI, 41-49; *Post Works*: ('Great Forgers'), I, 128-131; See also, *Diary*, 160, 175-176.
- 74 Masson: ('Aelius Lamia', 1856), 421-428; Cf., *Uncoll. Writings*: (Shakespeare's Text. - Suetonius Unravelling'), II, 37-54.
- 75 Masson: ('Sir William Hamilton'), 327-337; ('The Theban Sphinx', 1849), VI, 140; see, for example, *Recollections*, 405-406; ('Glance at the Works of Mackintosh', 1846), VIII, 149-155; Tave, 271.
- 76 Masson: ('Greece Under the Romans', 1844), VII, 253.
- 77 M.R. Ridley, 'Introduction' in *De Quincey Selections* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), xi.
- 78 Masson: ('Lord Carlisle on Pope', 1851), XI, 116.
- 79 *Ibid.*: ('Story of a Libel', 1841), III, 164-165.
- 80 Masson: ('Lord Carlisle on Pope'), XI, 117.
- 81 *Ibid.*: ('On War', 1848), 369-397; for example, 'The Household Wreck', 1838 and 'The Avenger', 1838, *passim*; ('Ceylon', 1843), VII, 445; *De Quincey and his Friends*, 97-102; ("Appendix" to the Confessions on their First Publication in Book Form in 1822'), III, 466-472; *Recollections*, 391-394.
- 82 Masson: ('Casuistry', 1839-1840), 335, 362, 365, 318, 345.
- 83 *Suspiria*, 110.
- 84 Masson: ('Confessions'), III, 223; ('Coleridge and Opium-Eating'), V, 206; *Confessions*, 2.
- 85 Masson: ('Confessions'), III, 224-226.
- 86 *Recollections*, 376.

- 87 George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, ed. Gordon S. Haight (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 437-438.
- 88 *Post. Works*: ('Murder as a Fine Art'), I, 82; Japp, ('Mr. Hogg's Reminiscences'), 329; Japp, ('Wednesday, July 8, [1857?]', 409-411.
- 89 Japp, ('Wednesday, June 18, 1856'), 392-393.
- 90 See Stephen Knight, *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 28-37; Richard Slotkin, 'The Hard-Boiled Detective Story: From the Open Range to the Mean Streets' in *The Sleuth and the Scholar: Origins, Evolution and Current Trends in Detective Fiction*, eds. B.A. Rader and H.G. Zettler (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 92-94.
- 91 A.S. Plumtree, 'The Artist as Murderer: De Quincey's Essay "On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts" in *Bicentenary Studies*, 155.
- 92 *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, III vols., ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Harvard: Belknap Press, 1978), II, 528.
- 93 *Ibid.*: II, 537-544; see also, 'The Mystery of Marie Roget', III, 723-774.
- 94 See above, 'Chapter I', 5.
- 95 *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, III, 740, 752, 773; III, 986.
- 96 Masson: ('Questions of Slips in Milton'), X, 416.
- 97 *Ibid.*: ('On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*, 1823), X, 389; Cf.: 'It is a fact which cannot be controverted, that...scarcely one effect in a thousand of all the memorable effects produced by poets, can, upon any theories yet received amongst us, be even imperfectly explained....The cases are past numbering in which the understanding says, or seems to say, one thing, impassioned nature another' (*Recollections*, 162-163).
- 98 *Ibid.*: ('Shakespeare', 1838), IV, 76-77; ('On Milton', 1839), X, 402-403.
- 99 Book V of *The Prelude*, 444.
- 100 *Recollections*, 161.

- 101 Masson: ('On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*'), X, 389, 393.
- 102 Jordan, 72.
- 103 *Ibid.*, 69-86.
- 104 *Ibid.*, 86.
- 105 Hazlitt, *Works*: XVII, 117. Hazlitt, of course, is quoting Coleridge speaking of Wordsworth.
- 106 Masson: ('Infant Literature'), I, 120-121; ("Appendix" to *Confessions*', 1856), III, 462.
- 107 *Ibid.*: ('Wordsworth's Poetry', 1845), XI, 306, 304-305.
- 108 *Ibid.*: ('Secret Societies', 1847), VII, 222; ('Oxford'), II, 63-64; *Post. Works*: ('Brevia'), I, 279.
- 109 *Ibid.*: ('A Brief Appraisal of the Greek Literature', 1838-1839), X, 300; ('Judas Iscariot', 1853), VIII, 202; ('A Brief Appraisal of the Greek Literature'), X, 323; X, 314-315.
- 110 *Ibid.*: ('Language', 1839), X, 250; ('A Brief Appraisal of the Greek Literature'), X, 302.
- 111 Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 60-86.
- 112 *The Letters of John Keats*, II vols., ed. H.E. Rollins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), II, 80; J.S. Mill, 'The Gorgias' in *Collected Works of J.S. Mill*, XXXI vols., gen. ed., J.M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966-1990), XI, 150; *The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough*, ed. H.F. Lowry (Pennsylvania: The Folcroft Press, 1969 [1932]), 146; Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 66.
- 113 *Ibid.*: ('The Poetry of Pope', 1848), XI, 58-59; ('Style', 1840), X, 190; ('Protestantism'), VIII, 305.
- 114 *Confessions*, 69; Masson: ('Infant Literature'), I, 124; ('Style'), X, 199; ('The Poetry of Pope'), XI, 68-69.

115 *Ibid.*: ('Secret Societies'), 201-202; *Post. Works*: ('Pronunciation'), II, 216; Masson: ('Schiller', 1838), IV, 427; ('Goethe', 1835), IV, 418.

116 Masson: ('John Paul Frederick Richter', 1821), XI, 267-268.

117 Rosemary Ashton, *The German Idea - Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought: 1800-1860*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 16-17.

118 Masson: ('John Paul Frederick Richter'), XI, 260.

119 *De Quincey and his Friends*, 223.

120 *Post. Works*: ('Anna Louisa', 1821), I, 93.

121 Cited by S. Musgrove, 'Introduction' in *Niels Klim* (Auckland: Auckland University College, 1953), 11.

122 Frederick Burwick, 'The Dream-Visions of Jean Paul and Thomas De Quincey' in *Comparative Literature*, (XX, 1968), 16.

123 See Masson: ('System of the Heavens', 1846), VIII, 33-34.

124 'Gillies's German Stories' in *Blackwood's Magazine* (XX, 1826), 857-858.

125 Essig, *Thomas De Quincey and Robert Pearce Gillies*, 152; S. Musgrove, 'Introduction' in *Niels Klim*, 10; Tave, 62; Goldman, 83-91, 68-75, 114-127.

126 Thomas De Quincey, *Walladmor*, II vols. (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1825), II, 306.

127 *Walladmor*, I, xii.

128 Goldman, 68.

129 Cited by Caseby, 149; Cf.: 'Hitherto I have used the materials of Mr. Taylor, giving to them only a new arrangement which (I hope) makes the logic more apparent' [Tave, ('Letters of Junius [cont.]', 1828), 258].

130 Masson: ('Style'), X, 229-230.

131 In an 1800 letter to William Godwin, for example, Coleridge writes: 'I would endeavour to destroy the old antithesis of *Words & Things*, elevating, as it were, words into Things, & living Things too' (Coleridge, *Letters*: I, 626). Similarly, in an 1802 letter to William Sotheby he remarks: 'A Poet's *Heart & Intellect* should be *combined, intimately combined & unified*, with the great appearances of Nature--& not merely held in solution & loose mixture with them' (Coleridge, *Letters*: II, 864). In his 1810 'Essays Upon Epitaphs, III' Wordsworth comments: 'If words be not...an incarnation of the thought, but only a clothing for it, then surely will they prove an ill gift' (Wordsworth, *Prose*: II, 84).

132 'Don Juan' in *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, VII vols., ed. J. McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979-1991), V, 3; Masson: ('Rhetoric', 1828), X, 77; *Recollections*, 191.

133 Masson: ('Style'), X, 230.

134 Jordan, 40; Rene Wellek, *De Quincey's Status in the History of Ideas*, 269; Masson: ('Letters to a Young Man'), X, 48.

135 Wordsworth, *Prose*: I, 134.

136 Book VIII of *The Prelude*, 505-506.

137 Proctor links Wordsworth's use of the term 'power' in the 1815 'Preface' with De Quincey's definition of the 'literature of power' but Wordsworth makes no mention of 'knowledge' in the 'Preface' and even Proctor admits that his use of the term in this context 'is not such as to accord precisely with De Quincey's use of it' (Proctor, 140-141).

138 See, for example, Masson: ('Letters to a Young Man'), X, 48; ('Oliver Goldsmith', 1848), IV, 308-310; ('Dr. Samuel Parr', 1831), V, 92; ('The Essenes', 1840), VII, 167; *Post. Works*: ('Anna Louisa'), I, 92; ('Cause of the Novel's Decline'), I, 303.

139 Masson: ('The Poetry of Pope'), XI, 55-56.

140 Clifford Leech, 'De Quincey as Literary Critic' in *Review of English Literature* (2, 1961), 44; Rene Wellek, *De Quincey's Status in the History of Ideas*, 269; Proctor, 131, 137-138; Jordan, 39.

141 Masson: ('The Logic of Political Economy', 1844), IX, 246.

142 *Ibid.*: 132, 188.

143 *Ibid.*: 168-169.

144 *Ibid.*: 34-135.

145 Cited by Goldman, 158; cited in Samuel Hollander, *The Economics of David Ricardo* (Heinemann: Educational Books, 1979), 669 (Hollander himself comments that 'this general evaluation by Mill seems to be quite accurate'); see James G. Murray, 'Mill on De Quincey: *Esprit Critique* Revoked' in *Victorian Newsletter* (XXVII, 1970), 11. (Murray argues that Mill's warm treatment of De Quincey is directly attributable to his conversion from Benthamite absolutist to open-minded liberal, not to any high regard he felt for De Quincey's economic writings).

146 Karl Marx, *Capital*, ed. G.D.H. Cole (London: Dent, 1974), 420-421; cited in Mark Blaug, *Ricardian Economics: A Historical Study* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 1; cited in Goldman, 158; P.D. Groenewegen, a review of 'Theories of Value and Distribution Since Adam Smith. Ideology and Economic Theory. By Maurice Dobb' in *The Economic Journal* (March, 1974), 193.

147 Masson: ('Secret Societies'), VII, 221-224; cited in Caseby: ('The Danish Origins of the Lake Country Dialect', 1819), 166; Tave: ('Foreign Quarterly Review', 1827), 227; Masson: ('On Wordsworth's Poetry'), XI, 297.

148 Masson: ('On the Political Parties of Modern England', 1837), IX, 383; *Ibid.*: ('Sir William Hamilton'), V, 341; Cf., *Mail Coach*, 210.

149 Masson: ('The Poetry of Pope'), XI, 63; ('English Dictionaries', 1823), X, 432; ('Rhetoric'), X, 127; ('The Poetry of Pope'), XI, 63; (Gilfillan's Literary Portraits: Keats', 1845-1846), XI, 393 (though in 1857 De Quincey retracts his 'denunciation...of Keats's licentiousness in the treatment of his mother-tongue', XI, 393).

150 *Ibid.*: ('Style'), X, 141.

151 *Ibid.*: ('Introduction to the World of Strife', 1851-1852), I, 77-78.

- 152 Cited in Caseby, 7; Bonner, 100; Masson: ('Protestantism'), VIII, 275.
- 153 Cited in Caseby, 129; Masson: ('Confessions'), III, 296.
- 154 Alethea Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (Faber and Faber, 1968), 43.
- 155 Masson: ('Confessions'), III, 285-286, 457-460.
- 156 *Suspiria*, 94; Japp, 387.
- 157 Bonner, 69.
- 158 *Suspiria*, 139, 144; *Mail-Coach*, 209-210.
- 159 *The Letters of John Keats*, II vols., ed. H.E. Rollins, I, 193.
- 160 *Suspiria*, 124, 109, 101; *Mail-Coach*, 200; *Post. Works*, I, 8.
- 161 *Suspiria*, 104; *Mail-Coach*, 215, 207; *Suspiria*, 143.
- 162 *Confessions*, 65; 43; *Suspiria*, 152, 88, 151; *Mail-Coach*, 186.
- 163 *Suspiria*, 147-148.
- 164 *Suspiria*, 103-105; *Mail-Coach*, 229, 220.

Chapter Four: The Disciple

- ¹ 'To William Wordsworth' in *Coleridge Poetical Works*, ed. E.H. Hartley (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 408.
- ² *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 357.
- ³ Masson: ('The Poet Clare', 1840), III, 145.

- 4 *Ibid.*: ('Confessions', 1856), III, 302.
- 5 *Recollections*, 33; Cf. De Quincey's comment that his early 'devotion' to Wordsworth and Coleridge 'had done more for the expansion and sustenance of [my] own inner mind than all literature besides' [('Recollections of Charles Lamb', 1838), III, 42].
- 6 *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 8-9.
- 7 *Diary*, 182.
- 8 *Ibid.*: 145-146, 154, 187.
- 9 Wordsworth, *Letters: The Early Years*, 454.
- 10 Japp, 75-76.
- 11 *Recollections*, 209-210; *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 89.
- 12 Cited in *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 211-212.
- 13 Masson: ('Letters to a Young Man', 1823), X, 48.
- 14 *Recollections*, 159-160.
- 15 Wordsworth, *Letters: The Middle Years, Part I*, 269.
- 16 *Diary*, 178; see, for example, 151, 172, 188, 195, 209.
- 17 *Ibid.*: 234.
- 18 *Recollections*, 225, 226.
- 19 Cited in Stephen Gill, *William Wordsworth: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 273.
- 20 *English* prose because in 1800 De Quincey's translation of a passage in Cicero was awarded seventh prize and published by the *Juvenile Library* (see Lindop, 29).
- 21 Cited in Lindop, 163.
- 22 See Wordsworth, *Prose*: I, 391, 396-400, 402-403.

- 23 Cited in Coleridge, *The Friend*: I, 377.
- 24 *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 37.
- 25 Coleridge, *The Friend*: II, 228-229.
- 26 See Lindop, 29.
- 27 *Diary*, 169-170, 171, 172; Masson: ('Rhetoric', 1828), X, 114.
- 28 *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 107.
- 29 See Wordsworth, *Prose*: II, 128.
- 30 Caseby: ('The Danish Origin of the Lake Country Dialect', 1819-1820), 165.
- 31 Masson: ('Letters to a Young Man'), X, 61.
- 32 *De Quincey and his Friends*, 156.
- 33 Caseby: ('Danish Origin'), 165; Masson: ('Letters to a Young Man'), X, 60.
- 34 Caseby: ('Danish Origin'), 173.
- 35 See, for example, Stephen Gill's comment that Wordsworth 'seized on the project [of the *Guide*] as something of his own, paying almost no attention to the engravings or to what might have been expected by way of introduction to an elegant publication. This was, in fact, a book that had been waiting to be written and its time had come' (*William Wordsworth: A Life*, 284-285).
- 36 See, John Wells, 'De Quincey and *The Prelude* in 1839' in *Philological Quarterly* (XX, 1941), 17-24; see also Lindop, 187.
- 37 Wordsworth, *Letters: The Middle Years, Part I*, 326; *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 158; Wordsworth, *Letters: The Middle Years, Part II*, 198-199.

- 38 Wordsworth, *Letters: The Middle Years, Part II*, 222; *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 320.
- 39 Robinson: I, 161.
- 40 Wordsworth, *Letters: The Middle Years, Part II*, 195.
- 41 John Wells, 'De Quincey and *The Prelude* in 1839' in *Philological Quarterly*, 23; see, *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 216; John Jordan, 'De Quincey on Wordsworth's Theory of Diction' in *PMLA* (LXVIII, 1953), 767-768.
- 42 *De Quincey and his Friends*, 240-241.
- 43 John Wells, 'Wordsworth and De Quincey in Westmorland Politics, 1818' in *PMLA* (LV, 1940), 1080-1128 (This article reprints *Close Comments upon a Straggling Speech*).
- 44 Wordsworth, *Letters: The Middle Years, Part II*, 464.
- 45 Wordsworth, *Letters: The Middle Years, Part II*, 451; *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 317;
- 46 Samuel Janzow, "'Philadelphus", a New Essay by De Quincey' in *Costerus* (IX, 1973), 59.
- 47 Japp, 153.
- 48 See, *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 286.
- 49 Wordsworth, *Letters: The Middle Years, Part II*, 543-544.
- 50 Ralph Wolfe, *Priest and Prophet: Thomas De Quincey and William Wordsworth in Their Personal and Literary Relationship* (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1960), 227-229; D.D. Devlin, *De Quincey, Wordsworth and the Art of Prose* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 69; John Beer, 'De Quincey and the Dark Sublime: The Wordsworth-Coleridge Ethos' in *Bicentenary Studies*, 168; Helen Darbishire, 'Introduction' in *De Quincey's Literary Criticism*, ed. Helen Darbishire (London: Henry Frowde, 1909), 17; *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 358-359, 50; David Wright, 'Introduction', in *Recollections*, 9.

- 51 Masson: ('Dr. Samuel Parr', 1831), V, 100-101; ('Mrs. Grant of Laggan', 1837), III, 28; *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 356-357; V.A. De Luca, "'The Type of a Mighty Mind': Mutual Influence in Wordsworth and De Quincey" in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* (XIII, 1971), 240; Wordsworth, *Letters: The Later Years, Part II*, 17.
- 52 *Confessions*, 61; *Recollections*, 40-41; Book X of *The Prelude*, 555; Wordsworth, *Prose*: I, 163.
- 53 David Punter, *The Literature of Terror* (London: Longmans, 1980), 405.
- 54 Wordsworth, *Prose*: I, 128.
- 55 *Diary*, 144; 148, 156; 148, 155; 172, 153; 153, 155; 155; 179; 189, 190, 192; 194; 171; 206; 172; 155, 157-163; 202-204, 206-208; 211.
- 56 *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 36-37.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 37.
- 58 *Recollections*, 155.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 189, 383, 381.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 382-383.
- 61 See Jordan, 229-246.
- 62 Cited by Charles Patterson, 'De Quincey's Conception of the Novel as Literature of Power' in *PMLA* (LXX, 1955), 357.
- 63 See, for example, Masson: ('The Essenes', 1840), VII, 150-151 and *De Quincey and his Friends*, 174; *The Mail-Coach*, 200; Alethea Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), 245; *Diary*, 206; Jan Gordon, 'De Quincey as Gothic Parasite: The Dynamic of Supplementarity' in *Bicentenary Studies*, 244; A.S. Plumtree, 'The Artist as Murderer: De Quincey's Essay "On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts"' in *Bicentenary Studies*, 145; V.A. De Luca, *The Prose of Vision* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 50; Ian Jack, 'De Quincey Revises his *Confessions*' in *PMLA* (LXXII, 1957), 146.

- 64 *Wordsworth*, 246; Book I of *The Prelude*, 382.
- 65 Book I of *The Prelude*, 383, 385.
- 66 Book II of *The Prelude*, 402; Book I of *The Prelude*, 386.
- 67 David Wright, 'Introduction' in *Recollections*, 9; see also, *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 360-362 and Grevel Lindop, 'Introduction' in *Confessions*, ix.
- 68 *Confessions*, 6.
- 69 *Ibid.*, 35.
- 70 Book XI of *The Prelude*, 567; *Confessions*, 35.
- 71 Book II of *The Prelude*, 399.
- 72 Jonathan Wordsworth, *William Wordsworth: The Borders of Vision* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 276.
- 73 *Suspiria*, 118; Masson: ('The Afflictions of Childhood', 1853), I, 28-29.
- 74 *Suspiria*, 92.
- 75 Book X of *The Prelude*, 550.
- 76 *Suspiria*, 158.
- 77 J. Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God* (Harvard: Belknap Press, 1975), 78.
- 78 *Suspiria*, 106, 111, 119, 114, 153, 157.
- 79 Cf. John Beer's reply to Miller's argument in *Disappearance*: 'The Christian God had not exactly disappeared from De Quincey's world; it would seem more accurate to suggest that the divine presence was for him real but ambiguous - and mirrored with strange precision the behaviour of his own devout mother' ('De Quincey and the Dark Sublime: The Wordsworth-Coleridge Ethos' in *Bicentenary Studies*, 185-186).
- 80 *Suspiria*, 118.

81 Robinson: I, 158.

82 *Suspiria*, 153

83 *Ibid.*, 160.

Chapter Five: The Rhetorician

¹ *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, II vols., ed. Frederick G. Kenyon (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1897), I, 167. Browning makes her comments in a letter dated 31 December, 1843, likely after reading De Quincey's essay 'Ceylon.'

² Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The Works*, Albany Edition, XII vols. (London: Longmans, 1898), I, 3.

³ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. A.J.P. Taylor (Penguin: Middlesex, 1985), 83.

⁴ A.J.P. Taylor, 'Introduction' in *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. A.J.P. Taylor (Penguin: Middlesex, 1985), 47.

⁵ Masson: ('The Poetry of Pope', 1848), XI, 56-57.

⁶ Japp, 254.

⁷ *Suspiria*, 87-88.

⁸ *Suspiria*, 87.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 87-88; (De Quincey is drawing heavily on Wordsworth's 1800 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*: see, in particular, Wordsworth's comment that 'a multitude of causes, unknown to former times...now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and unfitting it for all voluntary exertion to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor....When I think upon this degrading thirst after outrageous

stimulation, I am almost ashamed to have spoken of the feeble effort with which I have endeavoured to counteract it' (Wordsworth, *Prose*: I, 129).

¹⁰ Masson: ('Style', 1840-1841), X, 169; ('Rhetoric', 1828), X, 131; ('Oxford', 1835), II, 65.

¹¹ *Ibid.*: ('Philosophy of Herodotus', 1842), VI, 100.

¹² 'Mr. Pater's Last Volume' in *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: W. H. Allen, 1970), 229.

¹³ Masson: ('Philosophy of Herodotus'), VI, 196; ('Secret Societies', 1847), VII, 222.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*: ('Style'), X, 186.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*: 183.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: ('Oxford'), II, 63.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*: ('Style'), X, 190; ('A Brief Appraisal of the Greek Literature', 1838-39), X, 330.

¹⁹ Masson: ('Style'), X, 199.

²⁰ *Ibid.*: ('The English Language', 1839), XIV, 149-150.

²¹ *Ibid.*: ('Style'), X, 174, 179.

²² *Ibid.*: ('The English Mail-Coach', revised version of 1854), XIII, 287.

²³ Thomas Sprat, 'From *The History of the Royal Society of London*' in *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, III vols., ed. J.E. Spingarn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1908), II, 117-118.

²⁴ *Collected Works of Matthew Arnold*, XI vols., ed. R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), VIII, 314, 315.

²⁵ *Ibid.*: 314, 316.

- 26 *Praeterita: The Autobiography of John Ruskin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 211; *Collected Works of Matthew Arnold*: VIII, 314.
- 27 Cited in Derek Roper's *Reviewing Before the Edinburgh* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1978), 233.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 190, 187.
- 29 Robert Keily, *The Romantic Novel in England* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), 6.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 31 Cited by W.S. Lewis, 'Introduction' in *The Castle of Otranto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), x.
- 32 Hazlitt, *Works*: VIII, 242-243.
- 33 'A Dictionary of the English Language' in *Samuel Johnson*, ed. Donald Greene (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 319.
- 34 *Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century*, ed. R.F. Brinkley (London: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 415, 414.
- 35 'Preface to *Foliage*' in *Leigh Hunt's Literary Criticism*, eds. L.H. and C.W. Houtchens (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), 138; *Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century*, 414; cited in E.V. Lucas's *The Life of Charles Lamb*, II vols., (London: Methuen and Co., 1905), I, 381 (Fulke Greville is the other writer Lamb 'should feel the greatest pleasure to encounter'); Masson: ('Rhetoric'), X, 105.
- 36 Hazlitt, *Works*: VI, 345; *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, III vols., ed. E.V. Lucas (London: Dent, 1935) I, 257; 'Nightmare Abbey' in *The Works of Thomas Love Peacock*, X vols., eds. H.F.B. Brett-Smith and C.E. Jones (London: Constable, 1924-34), III, 73; *Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century*, 259; Bonner, 47.
- 37 Masson: ('Rhetoric'), X, 104-105.
- 38 Hazlitt, *Works*: XII, 228; Coleridge, *The Friend*: II, 21; Wordsworth, Book VII of 1850 *Prelude*, ed. E. de Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 247; *Collected Works of Matthew*

Arnold: III, 246-247; Masson: ('Rhetoric'), X, 114; cf. De Quincey's assessment of Burke one year earlier in the *Edinburgh Saturday Post*: 'Burke, the philosopher...with the finest and subtlest understanding that appeared in the eighteenth century, whose works are one galaxy of original and profound thought', Tave, 200.

39 Cited in David Cecil's *A Portrait of Charles Lamb* (London: Constable, 1983), 156; Hazlitt, *Works*: VIII, 245.

40 'London, 1802' in *Wordsworth*, 286; *Confessions*, 69; *Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century*, 11; Carlyle, *Letters*: IV, 173.

41 *Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century*, 268, 294; Coleridge, *Letters*: III, 541.

42 *Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century*, 266, 269, 275.

43 John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, ed. Martin J. Svaglic (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 50.

44 See R.D. Middleton's *Newman at Oxford: His Religious Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), 173. Middleton points out that the tendency toward Rome 'exists also in Hooker.'

45 John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, ed. I.T. Ker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 96-7; *Apologia*, 244-246, 248-49.

46 See Harold L. Weatherby's *Cardinal Newman and His Age* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1973), 38-40. Weatherby writes that in Taylor's writings there 'is a sign of things to come, a premonition of the subjectivism and philosophical scepticism which affects later English theologians, even High-Churchmen, so prominently.'

47 Masson: ('Confession', 1856), III, 267.

48 See, for example, De Quincey's comments regarding the 'illiberal spirit' of dissenters like John Taylor, editor of the *London Magazine*, and many of the men of his circle. It is 1821 and De Quincey has officially begun his career as a periodical essayist: 'Then first, indeed, it was', he writes, ' - and amongst the company which I sometimes saw at Mr. Taylor's - that I became aware of the deadly hatred - savage, determined hatred, made up for mischief - which governed a large part

of the well-educated dissenters in their feelings towards the Church of England. Being myself, not by birth and breeding only, but upon the deliberate adoption of my judgment, an affectionate son of that Church, in respect to her doctrines, her rites, her discipline, and her internal government, I was both shocked and grieved to meet with what seemed to me so much levity and rash judgment amongst the thoughtful and well-principled, so harsh an illiberality amongst the liberal, so little consideration amongst the considerate....With these views I was as much astonished as I was grieved to find the Established Church an object, at this particular crisis, of enmity so profound' [Masson: ('Mr. John Taylor', 1840), III, 129-130].

49 *The Golden Grove: Selected Passages from the Sermons and Writings of Jeremy Taylor*, ed. Logan Pearsall Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), 204.

50 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), 167, 181.

51 *Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century*, 426.

52 Masson: ('Language'), X, 258-259.

53 *Ibid.*: ('Charles Lamb', 1848), V, 231.

54 *Recollections*, 247.

55 *Ibid.*: ('Recollections of Charles Lamb', 1838), III, 51

56 *Recollections*, 247.

57 Masson: ('Charles Lamb'), V, 235.

58 Tave, 202; Masson: ('Charles Lamb'), V, 231²³²; *De Quincey and his Friends*, 102; Masson: ('Dr. Samuel Parr'), V, 92.

59 Tave, 202-203.

60 Cited by John Jordan, 'Thomas De Quincey' in *The English Romantic Poets and Essayists*, eds. C.W. and L.H. Houtchens (London: University of London Press Limited, 1966), 313; cited in *De Quincey and his Friends*, ii; Thomas McFarland, *Romantic Cruxes: The English Essayists and the Spirit of the Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 104-105.

- 61 Jonathan Wordsworth, 'De Quincey and Wordsworth: Two Dark Interpreters' in *The Wordsworth Circle* (XVII, 1986), 41; Laurence Stapleton, *The Elected Circle: Studies in the Art of Prose* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 137; Stapleton is speaking specifically of De Quincey's treatment of Ann.
- 62 Virginia Woolf, 'De Quincey's Autobiography' in *The Common Reader: Second Series*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1986), 136.
- 63 Edmund Baxter, *De Quincey's Art of Autobiography* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 11.
- 64 Sackville West, 240.
- 65 *Confessions*, 1.
- 66 Masson: ('Style'), X, 140.
- 67 Masson: ('Schlosser's Literary History', 1847), XI, 37.
- 68 *Recollections*, 101.
- 69 *Ibid.*, 45-46
- 70 Cited by David Wright, 'Introduction' in *Recollections*, 15.
- 71 *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, II vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), I, 1383.
- 72 Masson: ('Political Parties of Modern England', 1837), IX, 361; ('Rhetoric'), X, 93; ('De Quincey's Apology for Magazine Writing', 1858), VII, 6; ('Sir William Hamilton', 1852), V, 307.
- 73 Masson: ('Political Parties of Modern England'), IX, 361; cf. 'Even in such a case, where leisurely thought is really a possible disadvantage in regard to the immediate prosperity of the composition, it is still indispensable in regard to its revision' [('Sir William Hamilton'), V, 307].
- 74 Japp, 291; *Post. Works*: ('Brevia'), I, 272-273; cf. Florence De Quincey's comment that her father's 'work was always an extreme

labour and difficulty' (*De Quincey and his Friends*, 216); see, too, Coleridge's remark on De Quincey's 'marvellous slowness in writing a note' (Coleridge, *Letters*: III, 206).

75 *Masson*: ('De Quincey's General Preface', 1853), I, 14.

76 John Jordan, 'Introduction' in *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (London: Dent, 1964), xv; Grevel Lindop, 'Introduction' in *Confessions*, xxi.

77 *Masson*: ('General Preface'), I, 14.

78 See, for example, J.H. Fowler, 'Introduction' to *Essays from De Quincey* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1910), xxviii: 'As to De Quincey's claim to have invented a special "mode of impassioned prose", it should be said that examples are to be found in seventeenth-century prose, notably in Sir T. Browne's "Urn-Burial", of a very similar poetic eloquence'; Virginia Woolf, 'De Quincey's Autobiography', 134: '[De Quincey] turned from the neat, precise speech of his time to Milton and Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne; from them he learnt the roll of the long sentence that sweeps its coil in and out, that piles its summit higher and higher'; M.R. Ridley, 'Introduction' to *De Quincey Selections* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), xiii: "'Impassioned prose" may or may not be a happy description of De Quincey's most characteristic work, and in it the curious ear may catch echoes of Sir Thomas Browne and others.'

79 'Hydriotaphia, Urne-Buriall' in *Sir Thomas Browne: The Major Works*, ed. C.A. Patrides (Middlesex: Penguin, 1977), 306.

80 *Masson*: ('Rhetoric'), X, 105.

81 *The Works of John Ruskin*, XXXIX vols., eds. E.T. Cook and A. Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1903-1912), X, 82.

82 Virginia Woolf, 'The English Mail Coach' in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, VI vols., ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth, 1986), I, 366.

83 Walter Pater, 'Leonardo Da Vinci' in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1910), 124-125.

84 *Confessions*, 70-71; *Post. Works*: ('Who is this Woman that Beckoneth and Warneth Me?'), I, 16.

- 85 Masson: ('General Preface'), I, 9; *Suspiria* 88.
- 86 David Masson, *De Quincey* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1881), 194; George Sampson, *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1946), 666.
- 87 John Amis and Michael Rose, *Words About Music* (London: Faber, 1989), 367.
- 88 Proctor, 91-92.
- 89 *Longinus on the Sublime*, trans. H.L. Havell, intro. Andrew Lang (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), 82, 2, 13, 57, 64, 68.
- 90 Cited in Samuel Monk's *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1960), 31.
- 91 *Ibid.*, 57.
- 92 *Ibid.*, 116, 121-123, 117, 76.
- 93 *Ibid.*, 91.
- 94 Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, eds. H. Rosengarten and M. Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 7.
- 95 De Quincey, for example, asks himself, "'What shall be my character?' I have been thinking this afternoon - wild - impetuous - *splendidly* sublime? dignified - melancholy - *gloomily* sublime? or shrouded in mystery - supernatural - like the "ancient Mariner" - *awfully* sublime' (*Diary*, 163).
- 96 Masson: ('A Brief Appraisal of the Greek Literature', 1838-39), X, 301.
- 97 *Ibid.*: 300.
- 98 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lectures 1808-1819 on Literature*, II vols., ed. R.A. Foakes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), I, 544.

99 *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 31 (this sentence is not in the first draft of the letter; De Quincey adds it to the final draft, no doubt to stress his suitability for Wordsworth's company); cf. De Quincey's statement one year later to Wordsworth: 'I, [was] maintained from my infancy in the Love of Nature (*De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 37); Masson: ('The Nation of London', 1834), I, 203-204; *Recollections*, 250; ('Sketch of Professor Wilson', 1829), V, 277.

100 Masson: ('Confession') III, 306, 394; cf. Francis Jacox's recollection of a conversation with De Quincey during the early 1850s: '[De Quincey] spoke of his shortsightedness, which at Oxford had been so marked, that he was rumoured to be a bit of a Jacobin because he failed to "cap" the Master of his college (Worcester) when he met him, only from sheer inability to recognise him by sight' (Japp, 307-308).

101 See, for example, the *Kendal Chronicle's* swipe at De Quincey for his 'midnight rambles through and around this town (as your august personage is rarely seen anywhere between sun-rise and sun-set' (cited in Lindop, 228); see also De Quincey's comments in his essay on 'William Wordsworth and Robert Southey: 'What I liked in this solitary rambling was, to trace the course of the evening through its household hieroglyphics from the windows which I passed or saw' (*Recollections*, 228).

102 Masson: ('Modern Greece', 1842), VII, 364.

103 *Ibid.*: ('On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*, ' 1823), X, 392.

104 *Diary*, 182, 156.

105 *Post. Works*: I, 4-5.

106 *Post. Works*: I, 273.

107 Masson: ('The Spanish Military Nun', 1847), XIII, 194; ('Klosterheim', 1832), XII, 54-56; 148-149; Goldman, 97.

108 Cited in Eaton, 405, 418-419; cited in Lindop, 358.

109 Cited in Eaton, 374.

110 *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 36.

- 111 *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 43; Masson: ('Confessions'), III, 375 and *Confessions*, 34; *Recollections*, 248; Masson: ('Introduction to the World of Strife', 1851), I, 57.
- 112 'To the Editor of *Hogg's Instructor*' in Japp, 320.
- 113 Japp, 370-372.
- 114 *Ibid.*, 369.
- 115 Eaton, 488.
- 116 *Confessions*, 70; 33-34; *Suspiria*, 111; *Confessions*, 77.
- 117 *The Letters of John Keats*, II vols., ed. H. E. Rollins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), II, 102.
- 118 *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, VII vols., ed. Jerome McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978-1991), IV, 53.
- 119 Coleridge, *Letters*: I, 267.
- 120 *Suspiria*, 110.
- 121 Japp, 244-245.
- 122 *Mail-Coach*, 230-231; *Post. Works*: I, 12; *Suspiria*, 159.
- 123 *Suspiria*, 147-148.
- 124 *Ibid.*, 148-149.
- 125 *Ibid.*, 149.
- 126 *Ibid.*, 148; 149-150.
- 127 *Ibid.*, 112.
- 128 *Ibid.*, 150.
- 129 *Ibid.*, 91.
- 130 *Ibid.*, 151-152.

- 131 *Confessions*, 68; Japp, 243-244.
- 132 *Suspiria*, 152-153.
- 133 Masson, *De Quincey*, 200.
- 134 *Suspiria*, 96; Emily De Quincey describes the last few moments of her father's life: 'Then as the waves of death rolled faster and faster over him, suddenly out of the abyss we saw him throw up his arms, which to the last retained their strength, and say distinctly, and as if in great surprise, "Sister! sister! sister!" (See Japp, 449-451).
- 135 *Suspiria*, 88.
- 136 *Ibid.*, 88; 87
- 137 *Ibid.*, 88.
- 138 Book XI of *The Prelude*, 567.
- 139 *Suspiria*, 117.
- 140 *Suspiria*, 137-138; Masson: ('Confessions'), III, 222; *Mail-Coach*, 225; Masson: ('The Affliction of Childhood', 1852), I, 51; *Confessions*, 79; Masson: ('Confessions'), III, 448-449.
- 141 *Suspiria*, 88; Japp, 244.

Epilogue

- ¹ *De Quincey to Wordsworth*, 334.

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